





EX · LIBRIS  
C · R · ASH  
BEE

7/6





ART AND LIFE, AND  
THE BUILDING AND  
DECORATION OF CITIES



ART AND LIFE, AND THE BUILD-  
ING AND DECORATION OF CITIES:  
A SERIES OF LECTURES BY MEM-  
BERS OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS  
EXHIBITION SOCIETY, DELIVERED  
AT THE FIFTH EXHIBITION OF  
THE SOCIETY IN 1896

LONDON  
RIVINGTON, PERCIVAL, & CO  
1897



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015

## PREFATORY NOTE

THE following Lectures by members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society were delivered at the fifth Exhibition of that Society, held at the New Gallery in the autumn of 1896. The purpose of the Lectures is stated in the introduction to Lecture I.—‘Of Art and Life.’ The Lectures are here printed precisely as they were delivered.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. OF ART AND LIFE.	
T. J. COBDEN-SANDERSON . . . .	I
II. OF BEAUTIFUL CITIES.	
W. R. LETHABY . . . . .	45
III. OF THE DECORATION OF PUBLIC	
BUILDINGS. WALTER CRANE . . . .	111
IV. OF PUBLIC SPACES, PARKS AND	
GARDENS. REGINALD BLOMFIELD	167
V. OF COLOUR IN THE ARCHITEC-	
TURE OF CITIES. HALSEY RICARDO	211





I  
OF ART AND LIFE  
T. J. COBDEN-SANDERSON



## OF ART AND LIFE

BEFORE I begin my address to you to-night, I have a word to say in memory of him who was so lately our President,<sup>1</sup> William Morris. It is but one word; for I who knew him so well and yet shrank, from consideration of my own insignificance, from speaking of him overmuch in public even in his lifetime, shrink doubly now that he is dead. He is too great for me to essay to compass him with eulogy, too great to criticise, to judge. But if of him himself I cannot speak, I may yet be

<sup>1</sup> William Morris died on the opening day of the Exhibition, October 3, 1896.

Of Art and  
Life

permitted to speak of the inspiration he should be to us all, and especially to the Society of which he was the late chief. When, then, I think of him I seem to see a great light shed upon the path in front of us, which waits only till *we* move to move onward too—still onward, and to keep its post fronting the darkness. And the great light shed from him is this: that in the work of his hands, aided, guided by the work of the brain into shapes of everlasting beauty and utility, man—not certainly this man or that, for each must contribute in an infinite diversity of ways, but man as a whole, man which is human society organised to unity—shall find delight, a delight as of summer seas waking to summer music along the coasts of the world under summer's sun and moon, and the still shining stars of heaven. Work, incessant work, with Beauty for

our everlasting aim—*this* is the William Morris, this the memory of him, this the light shining upon the darkness of the future, which we all, and especially we of the Society whose President he was, ought to cherish and abide by for ever. Work! and, for our everlasting aim, Beauty!

I now begin the first of a series of lectures, having for their object generally the extension of the conception of Art, and, more especially, the application of the idea of beauty as well as of utility to the organisation and decoration of our greater cities. Those who come after me will deal with this more specific application. For me, it is my task to deal with the more general object, the extension of the idea of Art. The title of my address is 'Art and Life,' and though I would rather that it bore a more enigmatic

Of Art and  
Life

Of Art and Life and less presumptuous one, yet it does express or indicate the subject-matter which I would bring before you to-night. I desire to extend the conception of Art, and to apply it to life as a whole ; or, inversely, to make the whole of life, in all its grandeur, as well as in all its delightful detail, the object of the action of Art and Craft.

I should add that though the lectures are conceived of as a whole, they are not to be taken, nor is any one of them to be taken, as the official expression of the aims or ideals of the Society, or even of the group of members who have been commissioned to deliver them. Each speaker approaches the subject of his lecture from his own point of view, and is alone responsible for that point of view, and for the perspective of his subject as determined by it.

And now without further introduction, save to ask you to be indulgent if I should seem to you (as indeed is the fact) to be undertaking something too utterly beyond my powers, I will at once set myself to my task, and do for it—the best I can !

Art, as a manifestation of the artistic spirit, has its origin, or, to speak more correctly perhaps, its opportunity in Craft, and Craft in the needs of life. And as the needs of life vary from generation to generation, and from age to age, so must vary the objects of Craft, and with them the modes of manifestation of the artistic spirit.

I propose to consider and pronounce upon the objects of Craft in a highly developed community, and to see how far, and in what way, they offer opportunities to the artistic spirit to manifest itself.

But before proceeding to discuss the mode in which Art may manifest itself in such modern community, it will be well, by way of tonic, to consider briefly how in one or two ways Art has manifested itself in an ancient civilisation, which, in so many ways, is still the prototype, as it is still the basis, of our own.

To begin with, let us take an instance of the beauty of 'Home Life,' and of the beauty and dignity, and genealogy even, of such simple things as chairs and rugs and baskets, and what not, which the needs of 'Home Life' have at all times, in some fashion, stimulated Art and Craft to produce. It is a description, in the *Odyssey*, of the entrance of Helen into the hall of her husband Menelaus to welcome Telemachus, who has come to ask for news of his long-lost father, Odysseus:—



‘ And Helen came forth from her fragrant vaulted chamber, like Artemis of the golden arrows ; and with her came Adraste, and set for her the well-wrought chair ; and Alcippe bare a rug of soft wool ; and Phylo bare a silver basket which Alcandre gave her, Alcandre, the wife of Polybus, who dwelt in Thebes of Egypt, where is the chiefest store of wealth in the houses. He gave two silver baths to Menelaus, and tripods twain and ten talents of gold. And besides all this, his wife bestowed on Helen lovely gifts : a golden distaff did she give, and a silver basket with wheels beneath, and the rims thereof were finished with fine gold. This it was that the handmaid Phylo bare, and set beside her, filled with dressed yarn, and across it was laid a distaff charged with wool of violet blue. Of Art and Life

‘ So Helen sat her down in the chair, and beneath was a footstool for the feet.’<sup>1</sup>

The point I wish to emphasise in this beautiful scene is the fact that the furniture, which supplements the human

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey* iv. Butcher and Lang’s translation.

Of Art and Life being, has a human and individual origin. It is made by the well-known, presented to and by the well-known, and it is handed on from generation to generation with, so to speak, its own genealogy of tradition. It is thus worthy of the skill and of the genius of the Craftsman and of the Artist. Such furniture is made to play a dignified part in life ; and surviving its perishable units, to tell to future ages how nobly and how simply the men of its own day felt and satisfied their needs.

To go forth from the 'home' into the 'field.' The 'plough' and the 'scythe' are simple craft products to satisfy the needs of the harvest, one of the supreme needs of mankind. The plough alone is an interesting and picturesque instrument, and its movement along the straight furrow upon the surface of the earth, which it smoothly

cuts and turns upon its face, like an ever- Of Art and  
breaking wave, is also beautiful ; and Life  
the act of ploughing, the opening of the  
furrow, the slow advance, the time-  
keeping steps of the cattle who draw  
the plough and of the man who guides  
the team,—is an act, or series of acts, so  
beautiful, so simple and pathetic, that  
set, as it is set—a unity of effect in  
a shadowy framework of unknown  
agencies—it touches and stimulates the  
still higher creativeness, and, carved or  
painted or sung, reappears with kindred  
scenes in the imaginative reason, ideal  
and immortal ! Let us take such a  
scene :—

‘Furthermore Hephaistos set in the shield  
a soft fresh-ploughed field, rich tilth and  
wide, the third time ploughed—’

But before I go on to read to you Homer’s  
description of a field a-ploughing, and  
of other kindred ‘outdoor’ scenes, I

Of Art and Life      may perhaps be allowed to give distinction to my theme by recalling to your memory the making of the shield itself, the shield of Achilles, upon which the scene was depicted, and the smith-god by whom it was made and devised.

As you will remember, the shield of Achilles was made for Achilles by Hephaistos, the renowned lame god. Achilles, offended by Agamemnon, the leader of the Achaians, had retired from the fight before Troy, and had even forbidden his friend Patroclus to take part in it. But after no long time, pressed by the prayers of his friends, and affected by the losses the Achaians had sustained in his absence, he reluctantly withdrew his ban, and permitted Patroclus to reappear in the field, and to turn, if it might be, the tide of war in favour of the Achaians. The better to do this, and to inspire the Trojans

with terror, Patroclus dons the armour of Achilles, and appears before the walls of Troy in the similitude of his friend. But Patroclus, like every other substitute for Achilles, fights in vain. He is slain by the glory of the Trojans, Hector, and is stripped of his armour, the armour of Achilles. Whereupon Achilles is at last persuaded to bestir himself, and in his own person to stem and turn the tide, and to avenge himself upon Hector, the slayer of his friend Patroclus. And then comes the immortal moment when Achilles, naked and unarmed, stands alone in the trenches, and by his mere shout, and the divine terror of his being, repels the Trojans, and gains for the Achaians a temporary respite. Meanwhile, his mother Thetis has gone to Olympus to entreat Hephaistos, the renowned lame god, to make new armour for her son

Of Art and  
Life

Of Art and Life Achilles. The story of this visit, and the reception of Thetis of the silver feet by Charis, the wife of Hephaistos, and by Hephaistos himself, and the description of Hephaistos, the skilful artificer, are far too pretty and are all too pertinent to my purpose to be omitted ; and I shall ask your further permission to give them, and with all the detail with which they appear in the original.

And so :—‘Thetis of the silver feet came unto the house of Hephaistos, imperishable, star-like, far seen among the dwellings of immortals, a house of bronze, wrought by the crook-footed god himself. Him found she sweating in toil and busy about his bellows, for he was forging tripods, twenty in all, to stand around the wall of his stablished hall, and beneath the base of each he had set golden wheels, that of their own motion they might enter the assembly of the gods and again return unto his house, a marvel to look upon. While hereat he was

labouring with wise intent, there drew nigh      Of Art and  
unto him Thetis, goddess of the silver feet.      Life  
And Charis went forward and beheld her, fair  
Charis of the shining chaplet whom the re-  
nowned lame god had wedded. And Charis  
clasped her hand in hers and spake and called  
her by her name: "Wherefore, long-robed  
Thetis, comest thou to our house, honoured  
as thou art and dear? No frequent comer  
art thou hitherto. But come onward with  
me that I may set guest-cheer before thee."  
Thus spake the bright goddess and led her  
on. Then set she Thetis on a silver-studded  
throne, goodly, of cunning work, and a foot-  
stool was beneath her feet, and she called to  
Hephaistos, the famed artificer, and said unto  
him: "Hephaistos, come forth hither, Thetis  
hath need of thee." "1

Then Hephaistos answers from the  
heat of his workshop and recounts the  
great service which Thetis had one time  
done him, and how dread and honoured

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad* xviii. Translated by E. Myers.

Of Art and Life a goddess she is in his sight, and how deserving of anything he can now do to repay her for the service she had done him. 'But do thou now set beside her,' he bids Charis, 'fair entertainment, while I put away my bellows and all my gear.' He said, and from the anvil rose limping, a huge bulk, but under him his slender legs moved nimbly. The bellows he set away from the fire, and gathered all his gear wherewith he worked into a silver chest, and with a sponge he wiped his face and hands and sturdy neck and shaggy breast, and did on his doublet, and took a stout staff and went forth, limping: but there were handmaidens of gold that moved to help their lord, the semblances of living maids. In them is understanding at their hearts, in them are voice and strength, and they have skill of the immortal gods. These



moved beneath their lord and he gat him haltingly near to where Thetis was, and set him on a bright seat, and clasped her hand in his and spake and called her by her name: 'Wherefore, long-robed Thetis, comest thou to our house, honoured that thou art and dear. No frequent comer art thou hitherto. Speak what thou hast at heart: my soul is fain to accomplish it, if accomplish it it can, and if it be appointed for accomplishment.' And then Thetis tells him of her mission and of the perilous position of her unarmoured son, and entreats the divine artificer to make for him new armour.

The lame god readily undertakes to make the new armour 'such as all men afterward shall marvel at whosoever may behold'; and, returning to his smithy, immediately went unto his bellows and turned them upon the fire,

Of Art and  
Life

Of Art and Life and bade them to work, and so was begun the armour, of which the shield was a principal part.

‘First fashioned he a shield great and strong, adorning it all over, and set thereto a shining rim, triple, bright glancing, and therefrom a silver baldrick. Five were the folds of the shield itself, we are told, and therein fashioned he much cunning work from his wise heart. There wrought he the earth and the heavens, and the sea, and the unwearying sun, and the moon waxing to the full, and the signs every one wherewith the heavens are crowned, Pleiads and Hyads and Orion’s might, and the Bear that men call also the Wain, her that turneth in her place and watcheth Orion, and alone hath no part in the baths of Ocean.’

Therein too he set all the characteristic scenes of human life, and among them the scene of a field a-ploughing, and one or two other scenes of a like

kind, of outdoor life, which I will now go back to, to illustrate my theme of the nobility and beauty of labour artistically conceived :—

Of Art and  
Life

‘Furthermore he set in the shield a soft fresh-ploughed field, rich tilth and wide, the third time ploughed : and many ploughers therein drave their yokes to and fro as they wheeled about. Whensoever they came to the boundary of the field and turned, then would a man come to each and give into his hands a goblet of sweet wine ; while others would be turning back along the furrows, fain to reach the boundary of the deep tilth. And the field grew black behind and seemed as it were a-ploughing, albeit of gold, for this was the great marvel of the work.

‘Furthermore he set therein a demesne land deep in corn, where hinds were reaping with sharp sickles in their hands. Some armfuls along the swaths were falling in rows to the earth, while others the sheaf binders were binding in twisted bands of straw. Three

Of Art and Life sheaf binders stood over them, while, behind, boys gathering corn and bearing it in their arms, gave it constantly to the binders : and among them the lord in silence was standing at the swath, with his staff, rejoicing in his heart. And henchmen apart, beneath an oak, were making ready a feast, and preparing a great ox they had sacrificed : while the women were stewing much white barley to be a supper for the hinds.’<sup>1</sup>

So much for ploughing and sowing and reaping and harvests.

Here is another picture of a like kind too beautiful to be omitted :—

‘Also he set therein a vineyard, teeming plenteously with clusters, wrought fair in gold : black were the grapes, but the vine hung throughout on silver poles. And around he ran a ditch of cyanus, and round that a fence of tin : and one single pathway led to it, whereby the vintagers might go, when they should gather the vintage. And

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad* xviii. Translated by E. Myers.

maidens and striplings, in childish glee, bare the sweet fruit in plaited baskets. And in the midst of them a boy made pleasant music on a clear-toned viol, and sang thereto a sweet Linus-song with delicate voice : while the rest, with feet falling together, kept time with the music and the song.' Of Art and Life

In contrast, now, to this idyllic husbandry, place the picture, as it is presented to us in the daily papers, of the agriculture of England to-day, with the labourers flying to the towns, or left cheerless to die on an estranged and alienated earth. Where is the rich tilth and wide, where the many ploughers, and where the man to come to each to give into his hands a goblet of sweet wine ? And where is the demesne land, deep in corn, reaped with sharp sickles ? And where the lord, in silence standing at the swath with his staff, rejoicing in his heart ? And where are the henchmen,

Of Art and Life      standing apart beneath an oak, making ready a feast? Where the maidens and striplings in childish glee bearing sweet fruit in plaited baskets? and where, in the midst of them, a boy making pleasant music on a clear-toned viol?

All dissolved like a summer's dream; and in their stead I see only an agriculture lonesome as an unwon land, or, it may be, the wide, undivided prairies of a continent—yielding, indeed, a harvest fit for the consumption of a world, but for the soul and happiness of mankind, as yet,—nothing. And to go back to the picture of the indoor life, contrast again the distaff charged with wool of violet blue, and Helen who to her work came forth from her fragrant vaulted chamber, with the factory and the spinning-jenny of to-day, and the myriad bands of the pale-faced girls who have taken the place of the once fair Helen.

But, ladies and gentlemen, I do not direct your attention to these contrasts with a view to enlisting your sympathies at present on behalf of the lives of the workpeople. That is not my object; not now, not in this place and to-night. My object only is to show what an industry may be, how beautiful in itself and in its implements and in the picture which it yields to the imagination, when it is dwelt upon for its own sake as well as for its results; when, in short, it is treated in the spirit of a noble art; and what, on the other hand, an industry may be or become when engaged in solely for its results, and *not* in the spirit of an art; or when it is so broken up, distributed and magnified, that as a whole it passes beyond the ken, the interest, and intelligence of those to whom the lot has fallen to pursue it in some infinitesimal particular.

I must guard, too, at this stage against another possible misapprehension. I am not praising the past at the expense of the present, nor am I about to declare that to be happy and live lives seemly and beautiful, we must revert to earlier conditions and betake ourselves once again and unconditionally to the simpler industries, and to the simpler implements, of the past ; such is not my conception of the functions of Art or of its future. I am, indeed, not comparing one reality with another reality, but a reality with an ideal ; and I shall ask you not to apply the ideals of the past to the present, but to grasp, by anticipation, the great ideals of the future, and to apply *them*—the ideals of the future—instantly and in the spirit of an ideal, to the realities of the present. To these ideals of the future I shall come presently. In the



meanwhile, I would have you to mark, Of Art and  
beyond the substantive beauty of the Life  
description, that in executing on the  
shield of Achilles his great conception  
of all the deeds of mankind, the Artist  
took care to set them amid the wide  
heavens, and to direct the attention of  
the onlooker to the superb onrolling  
and unfolding of that silent universe  
which is still our own home to-day, to  
the sea, to the unwearying sun, and the  
moon waxing to the full, and to the  
signs every one wherewith the heavens  
are crowned—Pleiads and Hyads, and  
Orion's might, and the Bear that men  
call the Wain, her that turneth in her  
place and watcheth Orion, and alone  
hath no place in the baths of Ocean.  
*This* I take to be the universal note of  
all high Art, this recognition of the  
eternal in the heavens, and this setting  
of the deeds of mankind into harmony

Of Art and Life with it. And here I take my own stand in my address to you to-night.

Art implies a certain lofty environment, and is itself an adjustment to that environment, of all that can be done by mankind within it. Art as a great function of human imagination is not the creation of isolated objects of beauty, though isolated objects of beauty may indeed be created by Art, and in themselves resume all that is beautiful, orderly, restful, and stable in the artist's conception of that environment. Still less is it, what some may seem to imagine, the objects of beauty themselves. It is something—it is *much*—more. Art is, or should be, alive, alive and an universal stimulus. It is that spirit of order and seemliness, of dignity and sublimity, which, acting in unison with the great procession of natural forces in their own orderly evolution,

tends to make out of a chaos of Of Art and  
egotistic passions a great power of dis- Life  
interested social action: which tends to  
make out of the seemingly meaning-  
less satisfaction of our daily and annual  
needs a beautiful exercise of our in-  
numerable gifts of fancy and invention,  
an exercise which may be its own  
exceeding great reward, and come to  
seem to be indeed *the* end for which  
the needs were made.

Such is my conception of Art, and I  
imagine all men to be potentially artists,  
each in his own degree, and one and  
all to be capable of co-operating to the  
one great achievement of the human  
race, the bringing into unison with the  
rhythm of the universe the innumerable  
minor rhythms of human activity.

Nor do I stop at deeds to be done in  
such unison. I demand in the name  
of Art—and here is especially the note

Of Art and Life and distinction of Modern Art, as I conceive it—I demand in the name of Art, that science itself, that knowledge shall enter upon a new phase and itself become, in the mind of man, the divine *Re-presentment* of the universe without, an analytical knowledge only of which has hitherto been its one sole and supreme aim.

The shield of Achilles depicted the life of man as a whole, artistically conceived. It set it amid the heavens in unison therewith, and around the uttermost rim of the shield the artist set the all-embracing River of Ocean. That river of ocean may stand for the limit of man's knowledge of the universe at that time. The Homeric Greek imaged the world to himself as flat, flowed round by the River of Ocean. And yet even at that time, we may suppose, the world was round and immersed in

illimitable æther. The mind of the Greek, then, was not in fact, however it might be in spirit, in conscious unison with the world without him. Since that day the horizon of man's knowledge has been pushed indefinitely beyond the limitation set by the imaginary River of Ocean. The content of man's mind has been immensely changed. It is this new content which awaits the hand of the artist. It is dead as yet, a dead world. It waits the touch of art to make it live, to kindle it into life.

Of Art and  
Life

I have defined the function of Art : it is the setting in order the house of mankind. I now define the future of art : it is the setting in order the house of mankind *in exalted consciousness of the environment amid which it is placed.*

The earth was when man was not.

Of Art and  
Life

The earth and the heavens went through their changes, but alone, there was no man's voice to interpret or to chaunt their praises: man became, and still the world was silent; man had not yet grasp enough of intellect or of imagination or bulk enough of experience to understand or recreate it. Man in his childhood dreamt the dreams of childhood and saw with the eyes of infancy. The sky so ethereal and illimitable was to him concave and solid; the earth so strangely poised without hands to uphold it, a ball in space, was to him flat and solidly upheld from underneath. But man's power grew, and still grows, with his life, and with his power knowledge, and slowly, and latterly swiftly, the movements of the universe are being divined and imagined, and by-and-by they shall be overtaken utterly and from their remotest

origin live again *in consciousness* in Of Art and  
the mind of man, and the two move- Life  
ments, the movement of the universe  
without, the external universe, and the  
movement of its counterpart, the uni-  
verse within, the internal imaginative  
universe, shall go on thenceforward in  
unison together. To what end? Ah,  
who shall say! But in that ignorance  
lies man's opportunity of faith, and in  
that consciousness the opportunity of  
art. For this I take to be the future  
of Art, in the whole round sense in  
which I am bold enough now to con-  
ceive it,—it is directly and indirectly  
the imaginative *animation of a universe*,  
of a universe otherwise inanimate and  
unselfconscious.

It is possible, indeed, that in the lapse  
of ages or of æons, the order of initia-  
tion may be reversed, and the imaginative  
activities of man become supreme,

Of Art and Life     adapting and bending to some at present  
inconceivable ideal, the at present only  
dimly perceived and almost wholly un-  
controlled forces of an unconscionable  
world.

But in the meanwhile what may be  
the immediate function of Art? And  
in the meanwhile what its immediate  
future?

It is, as far as may be, to do each  
thing, however small, however great, it  
is to do each right thing well, in the  
spirit of an artist, in the spirit of the  
whole. Art is not decoration, it is not  
painting, it is not sculpture, it is not  
architecture, it is not verse, it is not  
music. It is, indeed, all these things in  
turn. But it is primarily, and chiefly,  
and always, the doing a right thing well  
in the spirit of an artist who loves the  
just, the seemly, the beautiful; and its  
immediate future is to apply this idea



of itself to the whole of life and not to the objects of the so-called fine and minor Arts only. Of Art and Life

As I have already stated, it is the specific purpose of the lectures which follow, to apply ideas of artistic treatment to cities, their organisation and decoration. Avoiding the subjects assigned to my friends, I will endeavour to illustrate the working of artistic energy in some other of the departments of modern life.

I will begin with the possible influence of Art in a supremely important department—that of education.

The school, the college, the university—here is scope enough for the application of the idea. Why do we do all these things? the boy, the youth, the man may ask. *To make Life beautiful!* should be the instant answer. In so replying, however, I do not ignore

Of Art and Life or set aside other and widely separate specific objects of education, enforced, and rightly enforced, at the present day in our schools and universities : courage, manliness, camaraderie, chivalry, discipline, knowledge, skill. But I insist that in the principle of fitness, seemliness, and, on the highest level, beauty, these other ends will be found to have their sufficient explanation. In beauty, finally, is the goal of knowledge ; in it the goal of practice and of conduct. And I am glad to think that the idea has already got some hold upon school boards and public schools, and that they tend to set themselves, in their buildings at least, in visible suitability, and even beauty, before the world. But it is not in their buildings only that this must be accomplished. The business of teaching should itself be a ceremonial, and there should be supreme occasions

when all the details of what is being taught should be gathered together into one harmonious whole, that the boy, the youth, and the man, may have a foretaste of what he is to aim at in the life beyond the walls of his school, his college, his university. There should, moreover, at certain recurring times, be special functions artistically conceived, when the boy and the man should be solemnly initiated into the inner mysteries of life, and when the distinctions of sex and the birth of new life should be lifted sheer and clear of all individual and personal passion, and placed, as they should be placed, in universal relations ; be seen to be, what in truth they are, but forms of one identical and impersonal process, dominant throughout all time, for the survival of life, and its transmission, changed and conditioned by the Present,

Of Art and  
Life

Of Art and Life from the *Past* to the *Future*. And, finally, and supreme over all, should come in cheerful wise the introduction to death. In cheerful wise, for in death is the principle of new life, and in new life the principle of progress, itself the ever shifting matter of an ever creative and yet constant Art.

I pass from education to what would seem to distinguish us chiefly, as a nation, at the present day—Commerce. It is the custom of artists to deride commerce. For my own part I see in it one of the grandest, if not the grandest, and fullest opportunity for the development in practice of the principles I have been endeavouring to elucidate. For what is commerce in its widest sense? In its widest sense it is the satisfaction of the needs of life all the earth over, out of the materials which the earth itself affords for the

purpose. Here, then, is an opportunity for working in the spirit of the whole of which the earth itself is so magnificent a part! Think of it! The soil, the preparation of the soil, the invention of the tools wherewith it is to be wrought; the use of those tools so as to yield a pleasure as well as a profit; the harvest of its products, animal, vegetable, and mineral, on sea and land, on mountain and plain, in river and lake, in heat and in cold, in summer and winter, in spring and autumn; their manipulation by hand and by deftly conceived and admirably adjusted machinery into things of beauty and of use; their exchange and distribution, over land and sea, by road and by rail and by ship; the erection of houses, of cities, of harbours; the establishment of public places, of public buildings in which to meet, to consult, and to celebrate

Of Art and Life      the great functions of the world's commerce — can you, I ask, conceive a greater object of Art in itself, or one which at any moment of its widespread evolution offers more opportunities for the creation of the fit, the seemly, and the beautiful?

To go with this matter a little further into detail, to illustrate how the least inspired trade of to-day may be raised, step by step, and widened by association, till it reaches the great levels of world-wide phenomena, and how the humblest of its pursuivants may be placed in a position, at least imaginatively, to supplement his own poor share in it by a knowledge of the whole, and so to lift his life into touch with the life universal, let me explain to you how the impoverished agriculture of England to-day, or the almost limitless agriculture of America,

which latter I have described as passing Of Art and  
by its magnitude out of the reach of Life  
the unaided senses, might, upon the  
imaginative side, be brought again under  
the dominion of the imagination. You  
will remember in the description I read  
to you from the *Iliad* of the 'soft,  
fresh ploughed field, rich tilth and  
wide,' you will remember the figure of  
the lord, 'standing in silence at the  
swath, rejoicing in his heart.' That  
venerable figure I do not expect to see  
again. But for him I would ask you  
to substitute the idea of 'the state,'  
and to impose upon that august repre-  
sentative of the people the lofty duties  
which would now be impossible of ful-  
filment by a single individual. And the  
duties of the state, from the point  
of view of the ideal of artistic treat-  
ment, with which I am at present con-  
cerned, I would adumbrate somewhat

Of Art and Life as follows. To begin with, the state should endeavour to make the husbandman understand the kind of function which agriculture, his labour, has to perform as a whole. The state should set before his mind, visibly, the fruits of the earth; should set before his mind, too, the lands whence the fruits foreign to his own country originally came; and that would give the state, through its teachers, an opportunity in its schools of husbandry to set before the mind even of the day labourer, the wide earth spread out geographically around him; also the place which it, a wanderer, occupied amid the stars visible at night over his head; this again would give the overlord, the state, an opportunity to explain the causes of the procession and iteration, year after year, of the seasons, and of that annual bursting



forth and dying away, in rhythmic recurrent sequence, through the spring and autumn, through summer and winter, and year after year, of the harvests of the earth, upon whose motions his own were dependent. Having set before the mind of the husbandman the pulsations of organic life, in summer and winter, and day and night, and his own dependence thereupon, the state should next enter upon the modes of cultivation, and the processes to which the products of agriculture were severally submitted, and the uses to which they were severally put, narrowing to completeness of detail only in treating of the fruits and products of his own cultivation. This would give the state an opportunity of entering upon the industrial lives of great cities and harbours, and the related industries of manufacture and distribution, by

Of Art and  
Life

Of Art and Life      land and by sea ; and the state should then trace back finally to the door of the husbandman, for his own use, the transfigured product of his own toil.

And the overlord, the state, should do all this by means of suitably designed apparatus, and in village and communal halls nobly built and typical of the dignity of labour. And the state should institute ceremonial institutions to mark and emphasise the changes of the seasons, and in beautiful pageantry the state should bring the labours of the year to a close, and initiate them afresh, year after year.

We should, thus and thus, realise, if not again any of the beautiful ideals of Homer, yet an ideal suitable to the knowledge and conditions of our own time ; and the energies of the people, roused to consciousness of their own

powers and possibilities, would possibly transcend the ideal here fixed for them, and pass into a future of imaginative and actual activity of which we, asleep in coward recusation, cannot form even an approximate conception.

Of Art and  
Life

I have now only to resume in a few words the gist of what I would have you to remember, and I shall have completed my task.

Life, then, is stupendous energy, and at not one moment of time is that energy suspended. First, the energy of the universe without man, then of man in unison with the universe, and of the two conjointly. That stupendous energy in its main and in its minor strains, in entirety and in detail, is the province of Art, and by Art must be controlled and directed. To what end? To what immediate end?

To the creation of the City Beautiful,

Of Art and the beautiful house of Mankind, and  
Life therein, and in keeping with the spirit  
of the Whole, the creation of the Fit,  
the Seemly, and again the Beautiful !

II

OF BEAUTIFUL CITIES

W. R. LETHABY



## OF BEAUTIFUL CITIES

My purpose is to suggest, if possible, a historical background against which we may see modern London; a perspective reaching back to the first primitive city; of all of which London is the final result—so far.

Very little attention has been devoted to the structural development of cities: the institutions of the group of citizens whose dwelling was the city have, however, been carefully studied. The author of *The City in Antiquity*<sup>1</sup> begins at the very beginning by considering the

<sup>1</sup> Fustel de Coulanges, *La Cité Antique*.

Of Beautiful patriarchal family, with its ancestor-  
Cities worship associated with the rites of the  
hearth-fire, which were performed by  
the head of each family.

As groups of families who looked back to a common famous ancestor became tribes, the family altars would be supplemented by, and ultimately merged into, the common altar. A *cella*, or small house, was built in direct association with this common altar or hearth as a dwelling-place for the common deity. This *cella*, enlarged and beautified, became a temple; the altar still occupied its place in front of the entrance to the temple, but, from being principal, it became in a sense accessory.

The city was thus founded on religious association; the central worship was the bond which made such association possible; the citizens were an



enlarged family who worshipped the same god at the same altar. Each city had its own gods who inhabited its temples, and these were only accessible to the citizens in the most restricted sense; to enter the Parthenon, for instance, it was necessary to be an Athenian. The citizen was thus one born into the religion of the city. To the citizen the stranger, having left the protection of his own city's god, was without religion, an outcast and an enemy.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

Thus there grew up a class, attached to the city, but not of it; and the history of any given city is likely to be the story of its revolutions.

The organisation of the city was absolutely religious in its sanctions. The divinity lived in the temple, and exclusively protected his own children; the State was the community of wor-

Of Beautiful Cities shippers; the King was a Pontiff; the Magistrate a Priest. Patriotism was one with piety; exile was excommunication.

A Greek town was double. There was a *polis* proper, the original city, within the sacred walls of which stood the ancestral temple. Outside was an aggregation of houses built without ceremony. This suburb—at first the place of the strangers—tended naturally to become the commercial city, while the holy city was more and more resigned to the gods. This view, which is mainly a brief summary from De Coulanges, perhaps concerns itself too narrowly with Greek ideas, whereas the city was first invented—so to say—in other lands. It also seems to neglect the influence of war in shaping communities and determining the situation and development of cities.

If we endeavour to determine what

degree of advancement in organisation and architecture shall justify us in speaking of an aggregation of dwellings as a city, we shall probably require a palace of a ruler, a central altar or temple, and a military wall. Of these the temple is the most characteristic, and archæology might almost guide us to the oldest temple and true mother city of the world, unless it be held that they were developed independently at various centres, a view which seems negatived by the family likeness of temples and cities. I have never seen any attempt made to define the natural orders of temples and seek their centres of distribution. Renan remarks that in the eleventh century B.C. the world was being covered with temples, but he does not inquire where they came from. When the mists first clear from the horizon of history, two civilisations are

Of Beautiful  
Cities

Of Beautiful  
Cities

discovered—one inhabiting the head of the Persian Gulf, and the other the Valley of the Nile. Whether or not Egypt derived the idea of the shrine-temple from Western Asia, it became so fully developed in Egypt that we can hardly doubt that Egypt gave the temple to the ancient world.

Jerusalem, as the best known city of antiquity, may in its origin and development serve as a type for others. Before Israel became a predominant power, Palestine was ruled from a number of fortified strongholds by petty kings. In the Book of Chronicles it is related how David—the second King of those who looked to Abraham as their great ancestor—came from Hebron and took the stronghold of Zion. ‘And so David dwelt in the fort and called it the city of David,’ and he built a house there.

Directly afterwards, the ark was brought to the house of David, and set up in some sort of movable shelter.

‘And it came to pass when the king sat in his house and had rest, that he said, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark dwelleth within curtains.’ In this verse we have the temple in the making—not merely as a structure, but as an idea. The war leader, settled in a house, at once sets about building a fixed house for the ark. The Temple of Solomon was erected on the crest of the Eastern Hill, now within the walls of Jerusalem, which, from the record and the analogy of other cities, must be the original fortified camp of Zion. The actual rock summit of this acropolis (now sheltered by the Dome of the Rock) formed the foundation for the ark.

The portico of the temple fronted the

Of Beautiful Cities dawn, and just before it stood the altar of burnt-offerings. The Court, not the Shrine, was, as in all ancient temples, the place of assembly. The great area of the sanctuary, as it exists to-day, is largely the work of Herod's time; the walls built round the rocky slopes of the Holy Hill to terrace up the Court are of great height and built of immense stones, which almost rival those of Baalbek. These walls sustained colonnades which surrounded the Courts, and provided shelter for the worshippers. A few years since Clermont Ganneau found the inscribed stone which warned off all strangers from entering the sacred precincts. By Herod's time the temple-interest had entirely absorbed the old acropolis. This holy Zion was separated from the dwellings of the people by its walls, and by a deep valley which was spanned by a noble bridge of one

immense arch, forming the approach to the 'Mountain of the House.' The town of dwellings and markets was also surrounded by walls. The Holy City occupying the original military stronghold remained the last defensive position in war. First a camp, then a palace, then a sacred temenos, summarises the normal development of an acropolis.

The valley on the farther side of the acropolis, away from the town, was the place of tombs.

This rock-city, set within a girdle of hills, and bearing a crown of towered walls on its dawn-lighted crest, became the object of a passionate love to the people. When, after the return from Babylon, the new walls were finished, we are told that they were dedicated 'with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.' To its poets Zion became the symbol of a heavenly city,

Of Beautiful Cities as naturally as, to Shelley, London suggested the reverse.

The growth of Athens was almost exactly parallel to that of Jerusalem. In Tiryns and Mycenæ we have similar cities, but arrested in their development. Any general photograph of Athens shows at once the isolated table-rock of the acropolis. This inland island, which now bears the great masterpiece of Greek art—the temple of the city goddess—was at first, like Zion, just a defended camp. It was walled with cyclopean masonry, and a palace was built in the enclosure to which, doubtless, the first altar of Athene was attached. A suburb, which became the lower city, grew up outside these walls; and ultimately, as at Jerusalem, the whole acropolis was absorbed by the sacred buildings, and became the high city of the gods round the feet of whom the mortals dwelt. In this lower



city the truly civic buildings and other temples sprang up, and it, too, was ultimately protected by walls.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

With the aid of an ancient guide-book, and some knowledge of the existing site and antiquities, we can almost shut our eyes and wander through the streets of the old city.

In re-reading the pages on Athens from a translation of Pausanias, I have been less surprised by the beauty, than by the fresh humanness and the universality of it all. Even in the dedications of the temples and statues, traditional names seem barely to disguise eternal ideas.

‘As one goes into the lower city,’ says our author, ‘there is a building for the preparation of processions.’

Then, after numerous temples and statues, a roofed colonnade, containing paintings of famous battles, was reached,

Of Beautiful and a temple to the Mother of the  
Cities Gods. Next came the council-chamber  
of the annually elected Five Hundred,  
where were statues to Zeus, to Apollo  
the persuader, and to Demos or Citizen-  
ship. Here were also paintings of great  
legislators.

By the council-chamber was seen a  
small domed building which protected  
the Sacred Fire. Here were statues to  
Peace and to the Hearth; on its walls  
were inscribed the laws of Solon; and  
round it stood statues of the Heroes  
from whom the tribes of Athens derived  
their names, and of many other famous  
townsfolk. Here also was a statue of  
Peace fondling Wealth. After more  
statues and temples, the Odeon—the  
public music-room—was reached, where-  
by stood a statue of Dionysus, god of  
revels.

Among other things worth seeing

was a fountain called ‘Nine Springs,’ Of Beautiful  
with a temple dedicated to the Earth- Cities  
Mother, and Persephone, the flower-  
maid, and to him who ‘first sowed corn  
in the fields.’ This was evidently quite  
a temple of agriculture; in front of it  
was a statue of a golden bull being led  
to sacrifice. Further on was a temple,  
in honour of the victory at Marathon,  
dedicated to Fair Fame. Then our  
author mentions the temple of Hephæstos  
(the present so-called temple of  
Theseus). In the market-place stood a  
statue of Hermes of the Market, pro-  
tector of bargains; and here was a  
portico with pictures of Athenian vic-  
tories, including the war of Troy. In  
this portico were hung up shields of the  
conquered, with written descriptions.  
In front was a statue of Solon, the law-  
giver. And in the market were altars  
to Shame, Rumour, Energy, and to

Of Beautiful Cities      Mercy, 'whom only the Greeks honoured, for they regard the brotherhood of men.' A gymnasium also belonged to the market.

Then the existing temple to Olympian Jove and its statue of ivory and gold are mentioned, and several statues to colonial cities—a good way of teaching imperial geography. In this quarter, which belonged to a late date, was a library having a ceiling of alabaster, ivory and gold, and a gymnasium with a hundred splendid marble columns. Here also were the Lyceum and the gardens, with a beautiful statue to Aphrodite, the work of Alcamenes. Close by the gardens ran the river Ilissus, with altars on its banks to the Muses and to Artemis the huntress, and here was a great crescent-shaped stadium of Pentelic marble. One of the most interesting features in Athens was the

Street of Tripods, where memorials of the music-festivals were placed ; the well-known monument of Lysicrates being one of these. Of Beautiful Cities

Leaving the lower town for the acropolis, a statue to Earth as Rearer of Children was passed. 'To the acropolis,' says our guide, 'there is only one approach, and it allows of no other, being everywhere precipitous and walled.' The splendid gateway of the Holy City had a gallery of pictures on the left, and to the right the Temple of Victory. Inside the entrance portico the whole area appeared covered with temples, sacred objects and statues. Here was a bronze representation of the wooden horse of Troy. There was a group of the Earth praying to Zeus for rain ; and, above all, the great bronze Athene rose so high that her plumed helmet was seen from out at sea.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

About half-way on the irregular enclosure (which levelled up the crest of the rock) to the right, stands the Parthenon, which contained the lovely gold and ivory statue of Athene and a treasure of beautiful objects. Before the eastern front stood the altar; the temple of Erechtheus, with its sculptured porch, stands to the left. Looking over the battlements of the enclosure on the south side, two vast circular open-air theatres are seen, the rising marble seats following spaces hollowed out of the rocky sides of the hill. Farther away to the west is Mars Hill, where the law pleadings were made, and here, appropriately, was a temple to the Fates. Outside the walls was the Street of the Tombs.

According to Plutarch, some complained that Athens was over-adorned, like a woman wearing too many jewels;

but Pericles answered that surplus wealth was best spent in such works as would bring eternal glory to the city, and at the same time employ her artificers.—Not a bad answer for the days of ignorance before Adam Smith.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

A similar account might be given for other Greek cities, especially those which, like Delos and Olympia, have been thoroughly explored. Everywhere we find the dual city inhabited by gods and men. Everywhere it was conceived as a larger home for the citizen, a great open-air museum and picture gallery, shadowed by groves and surrounded by gardens. Everywhere the city was the scene of a dignified common life, where frequent processions wound along sacred ways and brought first-fruits to the temples. Everywhere a beautiful graveyard was attached to the city, the tombs carved and painted with simple

Of Beautiful incidents or allegories : a mother taking  
Cities leave of her daughters, a young man borne away by Sleep and Death, a lady looking at her jewels for the last time and laying them aside in their casket, a warrior leading his horse, an old man with his dog.

After the conquests of Alexander, certain cities were built in the East, of great formal magnificence but lacking the more pathetic beauty of Jerusalem and Athens. Such cities were Alexandria, Antioch, Palmyra, Gerash, and several others in Syria. Within the walls of these, as usually planned, two avenues of columns at right angles ran each way from the gates through the city, and met at a central point, where a four - arched vault uniting them covered the Golden Milestone. The chief temples, hippodromes, and other public buildings, were symmetrically



placed to form part of a spectacular whole. At Gerash, the street of columns running east and west led up to a screen of columns disposed as a vast hemicycle.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

Rome itself, in its time of maximum, was overloaded with this merely material grandeur, but it never became formalised to any great extent in its plan. Its development up to a point is according to the ancient type. The first Rome, the sacred quadrangular city, was fortified on the Palatine Hill. Within it stood the (so-called) Palace of Romulus and the Great Altar. Here later stood the palaces of the Emperors; and the hill ultimately, it is said, gave its name to the royal dwellings.

On the slopes of the neighbouring Capitoline was the town of the non-Latin peoples. The valley between—common to the two—was occupied by

Of Beautiful Cities the great Forum, which in later days became the centre of civic Rome. It was then marble-paved, and entered by triumphal arches; through it ran the sacred way to the Palatine. In the Forum was the great Basilica of Justice, the Temple of Peace, the meeting-place of the Senate, and the honorary statues. At the end of this paved area was the raised tribunal, its front decorated with the bronze beaks of conquered ships—the Rostra. Close by was the Golden Milestone, the central stone of the Roman world. In the Forum was the sacred fig-tree, and not far off stood the primitive temple of Vesta, the little dome raised over the city hearth of pure fire.

No attempt can here be made to describe the monuments of Rome: the temple of Apollo on the Palatine, with its ivory door and statues of all manner of precious substance; the great palaces

of the Emperors ; the Circus Maximus and Coliseum ; the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, with its roof of gilt bronze and gold-plated doors ; the Pantheon and splendid public baths.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

In the days of the Empire, when commerce ramped in Rome, rings and syndicates for buying up property were formed. An edict characterises this as 'a murderous commerce, insulting the public happiness, and covering the ground with ruins instead of being an encouragement to new building.'

Rome and Constantinople were the two cities of antiquity which were chiefly affected and transformed by Christianity. All ancient roads led to Rome, all modern roads lead from it. Still, Rome is more pagan and Constantinople more Christian ; the latter stands, as it were, this side of the watershed of history. Theodoric the Goth tried to incite the

Of Beautiful Cities citizens of Rome to care for it, writing to them that 'even the beasts loved their dens'; but during the earlier Middle Ages the city remained a ruinous waste, with here and there a great basilica.

Byzantium had been comparatively unimportant until refounded as Constantinople, and it was not till the sixth to the tenth century that it reached its fullest development, and long after that it maintained its reputation as the great typical city.

Constantinople is situated on a narrow spit of land which pushes out eastward, something like a model to scale of the county of Kent.

On the north side is the deep-sea harbour—the Golden Horn. On the west the city is cut off from the rest of Europe by the land wall: to the south is the Sea of Marmora, which surrounds the eastern point and there becomes the

Bosphorus. Reverting to the plan of Kent, the estuary of the Thames represents the Golden Horn; the English Channel and North Sea take the place of Marmora and Bosphorus; the North Foreland is, as it were, Seraglio Point. The Bosphorus is, however, but a narrow strait, and beyond it is seen a range of purple mountains streaked with snow—the outworks of Asia.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

All round the sea margin of the city is built a battlemented wall, with towers at intervals. On the land side the defence is a line of triple wall and moat which joins the extremities of the sea-wall (Procopius says), ‘like the clasp of a diadem.’ On the high ground at the extreme point the first Greek city had been built, and this always remained the acropolis. Constantine largely rebuilt the city, and Justinian adorned it, but its greatest splendour

Of Beautiful Cities was probably subsequent to the reign of Basil the Macedonian.

Looked at from the Bosphorus, the leading first impression would have been of a vast multitude of flat domes,—not merely several, but the space inside the walls crowded with domes like a tray full of marbles, large and small. The seaward slope of the old acropolis at the point was occupied by the palace area. This was a large garden containing isolated buildings: dwellings, churches, fountains, exedrae, a pharos. One of the palaces, the House of Justinian, still stands built on the actual sea-wall. Another was the Golden Triclinium, and a third the Palace of Porphyry. The gardens, then as now, would be full of tall cypresses. The buildings were of thin bricks and white marble: some of them would be sheeted with slabs of coloured marbles; others

would be covered with a golden mail of mosaic. The doors and some of the domes were of gilt bronze,—such, for instance, was the dome of the gate called Chalce, opening from the palace to the square towards the city. This square, called the Augustæum, was between the palace and Sta. Sophia, which is built on the crest of the old acropolis. One of many tall columns bearing statues, which rose like minarets among the domes of the city, stood in this square ; it was plated with gilt bronze, and supported a colossal gilt bronze statue of Justinian on horseback. Here also was the silver statue of Eudoxia on its porphyry pedestal. This square has many correspondences with the great Forum of Rome ; in it was the Senate, and amongst the buildings surrounding it was a dome standing above arches opening to four ways, which

Of Beautiful Cities formed a canopy to the golden milestone of Constantinople. Just outside the Augustæum was the entrance to the great Hippodrome, which contained an Egyptian obelisk, the tripod from Delphi, and a crowd of statues. Opening from the Augustæum, a wide colonnaded street ran backwards through the city to the Forum of Constantine—a circular area surrounded by colonnades, where the porphyry column still stands. Beyond this a main street led past the Church of the Holy Apostles, where the emperors were buried, to the great marble tower in the land walls, called the Golden Gate. Most of the other streets were so arranged as to open towards the sea, the prospect of which was carefully guarded in the city building-act ; even the house-fronts above the ground story were mostly twisted round on corbels to assist in gaining them a seaward aspect.



The city was, and is, full of greenery. The numerous monasteries had large gardens, and every church had a cloister in front full of trees, and having fountains in the midst. In other places gardens and even cornfields were found within the walls. Some of the churches were covered all over externally with gold mosaic. One of these was the Church of St. Mary of the Fountain, described by a Spanish ambassador about 1400. It was surrounded by beautiful gardens full of cypress and fruit trees; and outside, 'it was all richly worked in gold, azure, and other colours.' In the narthex were mosaics of the Emperor Romanus and the Virgin, and of thirty towns given to the church by the emperor, and here also was a Jesse-tree, 'all in mosaic and most marvellous.'

For last impressions, see the blue

Of Beautiful Cities      sea washing the towers of the ten miles of wall. Look at the thousand low domes, lead-grey or gilt, backed by tall cypresses and interrupted now and then by a tall, statue-bearing column.

Let our last look of all be at Sta. Sophia, which surmounts the seaward point. Its dome—star-sprinkled to the interior—expanded above ‘pastures’ of marble on rainbow arches. The altar is of jewelled gold, standing under a canopy of silver. From the vaults hang such a multitude of lights that at night the forty windows of the lighted dome seem like an illuminated coronet suspended above the imperial city.

The new influence in art, Christian and Constantinopolitan, soon reached Italy, and then came farther west and north along the old Roman routes, along the coast of the Mediterranean, over the Alps to Lyons and Central

France and Britain, along the river Of Beautiful  
courses of Germany where Charles the Cities  
Great made Aix a Byzantine city.

About the year 1000 this Eastern tradition, under the influence of Western energy, began to change into a new art which was to become the glorious Gothic of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Of this period I shall take Paris and London as types, passing by Venice built in the sea ; Bologna and Verona, those wonderful towns of towers within their swallow-tailed battlements, Florence, Pisa, Lucca, Siena. We must also pass by the great church and craft cities of France, and England, and Germany—Tours, Nevers, Bourges, Chartres, Amiens, Canterbury, Lincoln, York, Winchester, Nuremberg, Prague. We must see them all in one general glance as from cloudland. Look at the

Of Beautiful  
Cities      green belt of Europe, sea-washed, veined  
with streams, bossed with mountains,  
and dotted all over with towered  
cities. Each is of no great size ; each  
is simple and self-contained within its  
walls, one larger building, as it were,  
laid down midst vineyards, set on a hill,  
or strung on a river's thread. See  
from our high view-point the flood-line  
of approaching dawn light up, one after  
the other, these miracles of spirework  
and sculpture.

In the Middle Ages the mere getting  
through of life appears to have been  
made romantic : the people seem to  
have played at war romantically, to have  
traded artistically, and to have built  
fairy architecture.

There is indeed much in a habit of  
mind ; it is impossible to say how much  
of the present is shaped, not by neces-  
sity, but by what Stevenson called

‘commercial imagination,’ the make-believing of politicians. ‘Ah!’ it is likely to be said, ‘those of the Middle Ages equally looked back to a Golden Age long gone by’; but really it is hardly so. Indeed, so far as the outer world goes, everything written and wrought seems to show that these people rather liked being alive. Everywhere it is apparent that they knew they were having a good time.

If any history of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is ever attempted before the monuments are all restored out of existence, it should appear from the chronicles and romances that Art was not then the result of a blind instinct and accident; those people knew very well that they liked sunlight on whitewashed walls, blue sky seen through traceried parapets, pinnacles appearing over trees, the twinkling of

Of Beautiful gilt vanes, sharp arches, long aisles,  
Cities bright windows, and stories, which  
everywhere—

‘In gold and azure over all  
Depainted were upon the wall.’

If a romance writer or illuminator wanted to describe or figure a castle of romance, he did not recall some mouldering ruin, but went and looked at the newest thing from which the scaffolding had hardly been struck. Thus in one romance a ‘huge high’ castle is said to have had so many towers, pinnacles, and chimneys, ‘all chalk white,’ that it seemed to be ‘pared out of paper.’

Perhaps the most amusing city of English romance is that in Lydgate’s *War of Troy*. Its marble walls were 200 cubits high, and at each corner a great crown of gold fretted with rich stones shone bright in the sunshine.

Six gates of brass, in as many towers, and a vast number of turrets, surrounded the walls. On the tops of the turrets were raised up brass figures of savage beasts—bears, lions, tigers, boars, dragons, harts, elephants, unicorns, bulls, and griffins. The houses were ornamented by ‘craft of masonry,’ and covered with lead. The streets were paved chequer-wise, white and red, and along them ran cloisters,

Of Beautiful  
Cities

‘For men to walk together twain and twain,  
To keep them dry when it happed to rain.’

But how came this marvellous and universal beauty in things made? Is Art a wind that bloweth where it listeth, or is it subject to conditions? I find the central principle of the Middle Ages not in feudalism, not even in the Church, but in the guild system. The Church itself was a guild which permitted no underselling or adultera-

Of Beautiful Cities tion in its own sphere. The feudal system was practically the rule of the guild of land- and war-lords, while the universities, as is well known, were guilds of scholars. By means of their guilds the craftsmen, too, won a place, and built up and governed the free cities. So was good work understood. So the good workman was honoured.

The place taken by the craftsmen, and mediæval art, are complementary phenomena. The misleading and, indeed, meaningless phrase, 'Gothic architecture,' should give way to some such term as Mason-craft or Guild-work.

Paris was the great and typical Gothic city—supreme in all, it was Canterbury, London, and Oxford in one; a royal and ecclesiastical capital, a university, and a great mart and city of craft. It was the centre of the mediæval movement, which is best symbolised and



summed up by the noble Lady Church Of Beautiful  
standing at the middle point of the Cities  
little island in the Seine, which was  
covered by the original Roman town.

Paris was by acclamation the most beautiful city of the Western world. The fourteenth century English author of *Philobiblon* says: 'What a rush of pleasure rejoiced our heart as often as we visited Paris, the paradise of the world. On account of our love the days appeared too few, and we ever longed to remain there.'

Old Paris has been best understood in the chapters inserted in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame*—chapters written, as he says, to inspire the nation with a love for their national architecture. Hugo is one of the dozen or two people who have ever really *seen* Gothic art, and his description rises to almost a shriek in its clear intensity of understanding. I

Of Beautiful Cities know nothing more ironical than that sixty years after he described the 'leprosy' (it is his word) of restoration which had disfigured the fair face of the great cathedral, we should still be energetically pulling down or peeling the skin off the last examples of Gothic art.

Paris was born on the little cradle-shaped island of the Seine which to-day forms the city proper : the city was joined to the mainland by two bridges. It has been enlarged at different times by enclosing segments on the north and south banks of the river within fortified walls. Within these walls the houses accumulated—like water in a basin—to overflow and have the boundaries again enlarged.

Geographically, as well as in organisation, mediæval Paris was clearly divided into the city, the university, and the town.

The university occupied the 'Southwark' of Paris, and was crowded with colleges around the Sorbonne. On the island of the city stood Notre Dame; the Old Palace with its vast hall surrounded inside with statues of all the kings, and covered by wooden vaults painted blue, fleur-de-lisé in gold; and the Ste. Chapelle, that wonderful crown of stone built by St. Louis' mason above the Crown of Thorns. The King's Great Hall, which became the Palais de Justice, was the Westminster Hall of Paris. The Ste. Chapelle was, like St. Stephen's, the Palace Chapel. There was as well, a crowd of some score of churches on the island. During the rivalry of Richard I. and Philip Augustus, the town on the north side of the river, and the university quarter to the south, were included within walls. On the river bank on the north side, in a position analogous

Of Beautiful  
Cities

Of Beautiful Cities to that of the Tower of London—just beyond the walls, that is, but westward—the King built his castle, the Louvre, a reply to Richard's 'Saucy Castle' (Château Gaillard) which crowns a chalk cliff at Les Andelys, by Seine-side. Later, in the fourteenth century, the wall of the northern town was rebuilt in a much larger circuit to include the Louvre, which, under Charles v., was much increased and became an enormous fortification, where as many as twenty-three towers are said to have surrounded the great keep. On either river bank were several other palaces, dozens of churches, inns, markets, and the streets occupied by the various crafts—petrified waves of a sea of gables. A zone of great abbeys surrounded the city, within and without the walls. Beyond, the open country was diapered with castles, monasteries, village churches. Look

back in thought, says Hugo, see the dawn break over this 'hedge' of towers and spires, detach on a clear horizon the profile of old Paris. Listen! as the bells wake, can anything the world over be so moving and so joyous as this tumult of sound, a very furnace of harmony, a thousand bronze voices chanting through pipes of stone three hundred feet high. 'And then compare'!

When Roman London was founded, the river was a great spreading flood with islands here and there, and several streams running into it on the ground now occupied by the larger city. Close against the east bank of one of these streams—which in consequence came to be called the 'Wall-brook'—a large walled citadel was built at the head of a wooden bridge which passed over the river. Edgware Road was then, as now, the north-west road; Bede tells us it was

Of Beautiful Cities called Watling Street. If we look at a relief map and see how in a perfectly straight line it passes the Hampstead Hills, we shall see good reason for its position. Approaching London, it turned sharp to the left and passed along the course of Holborn. The citadel above-mentioned must not be confused with the city included within London Wall; it was rather a great castle or fort, the ordinary dwellings being without it. Cannon Street Station seems to occupy the acropolis of London; London Stone seems to mark it historically. It was not until the fourth century that the city wall was built, of which London Wall marks the position northwards. Several writers have thought that the Roman wall did not extend so far west as to include the site of St. Paul's; not only does this seem likely, but from the congested nature of the wards in central

London as compared with those both Of Beautiful  
east and west, I think it probable that Cities  
the Roman boundary was considerably  
within the present city limits. Indeed,  
the symmetrical arrangement of the  
streets between Foster Lane on the  
west, and Bishopsgate Street on the east,  
suggests that the Roman city did not  
extend far beyond these lines.

Of the pre-Norman age many facts  
may be gleaned. There is no doubt  
that St. Paul's was founded at the be-  
ginning of the seventh century. A  
grave-stone found in the churchyard,  
now in the Guildhall, records two  
Danes. In the *Heimskringla* there is  
an interesting description of London  
Bridge in the reign of Æthelred. 'A  
bridge was there across the river, be-  
twixt the city and Southwark [called a  
'cheaping-town'], so broad that wagons  
might be driven past each other there-

Of Beautiful Cities over. On the bridge were made strongholds, both castles and bulwarks looking down stream, so high that they reached a man above his waist; but under the bridge were poles stuck into the river.<sup>1</sup> The folk-mote of the people was held at the north-east angle of St. Paul's Churchyard against the Cheap; here public questions were settled by their Yea or Nay.

In Norman times the city became very prosperous. The Tower was now built, and St. Paul's and the palace of Westminster were rebuilt. Apart from the great buildings, it would in much resemble a Devonshire village; many houses were mud and the roofs were thatched. According to Fitz-Stephen, the twelfth century historian, there were in his time thirteen conventual and 126 smaller churches. Smithfield, he says,

<sup>1</sup> Ed. W. Morris, II. p. 13.



was the playground of the people ; round about the city were meadows and many streams by which the wheels of mills were ‘ put in motion making cheerful sound ’ ; ‘ many were the excellent springs of clear water flowing over bright stones ’—such were Holy-Well, Clerkenwell, and St. Clement’s. Within the city, craftsmen following similar occupations were grouped together. The dwellers in the city were noteworthy, he continues, for handsomeness in dress and manners. ‘ It is happy in the healthiness of its air, in the Christian religion, in the strength of its defences, the nature of its site, the honour of its citizens, the modesty of its matrons—it is pleasant in sports and fruitful of noble men.’ Such was the ideal of the ‘ Dark Ages.’ Fitz-Stephen was not alone in his admiration for London ; the writer of the *Chronicle of Ingulphus* says he was born ‘ in the most

Of Beautiful Cities beautiful city of London.' In the ballad of *Chevy Chace* occurs the line 'Worde is commyn to lovly London.' 'Beautiful' was doubtless the right epithet for the city when, small and white, it was served by one long bridge, and was dominated by the 'famous' church of St. Paul's.

Perhaps London reached the maximum of its romantic period at the mid-point of time between the two descriptions of Fitz-Stephen and Stow—the end of the fourteenth century. London had then recovered from the effects of the Black Death, but its romantic beauty had not been altered by the later merchant-Gothic of the fifteenth century. It was the London of Chaucer.

Approaching along the Canterbury Road, we should first see the tall spire of St. Paul's ; at its apex, glittering in the sun, is the great gilt relic bowl which

contained a fragment of the True Cross. Of Beautiful  
Passing the Norman Abbey at Ber- Cities  
mondsey, and a great number of inns  
which especially gathered in this quarter,  
we come to the gateway of the bridge.  
The inns just mentioned are galleried  
buildings surrounding open courts like  
eastern khans, both alike being derived  
from Rome and Constantinople. The  
bridge is a work of most romantic early  
Gothic of King John's time. It is very  
narrow, and thus seems of exaggerated  
length. At intervals jut out the deep  
triangular recesses over the piers, one  
of which bears the Chapel of St. Thomas.  
On the left, by the south end of the  
bridge, is the noble church of St. Mary  
Overie, rebuilt after a fire in 1213. Close  
to the far end, on the right, is the church  
of St. Magnus, showing traces, doubtless,  
of its remote foundation by the Danes.  
Still further to the right (beyond the

Of Beautiful  
Cities      quay-pools where the craft are drawn up by the yards of the traders) rises the great square keep of the Tower of London surrounded by a circlet of towers within a moat. Westward from the Tower stretches the town. What at first sight strikes the eye is the multitude of tall spires, rising behind the quay walls like the masts of a harbour full of ships.

These spires were of wood covered with lead, some of them being brightly painted and gilt. The city was thronged with churches, and almost every church seems to have had at least one such spire. Above them all rose the central spire of St. Paul's, 500 feet high, the highest spire in the world. Close by eastward, was another great spire over the detached belfry which contained the big bells of the city ; this was also leaded, and was surmounted by a figure of

St. Paul. Still eastward, there was another such spire, at St. Michael, Cornhill ; to the west rose that of St. Bartholomew, Smithfield ; and another was situated at St. John's Priory, Clerkenwell. I have been thus particular as to these leaded spires, as they give the dominating character to the city as seen against the sky—the profile of first and last impression. They were in no sense makeshifts for stone ; Stow, for instance, says that the last-mentioned, built in 1381, was a most curious piece of workmanship, graven, gilt, and enamelled, to the great beautifying of the city.

As Constantinople was a city of low domes, and Bologna a city of towers, so London was, first of all, a city of leaded spires. The next thing to strike us is the snowy whiteness of everything : the houses, churches, and even St. Paul's itself, are all whitewashed, and illuminated

Of Beautiful here and there with pictures of St.  
Cities Christopher, a Majesty, a Virgin, or  
some heraldry and knotwork. Recall  
to your minds some bright little fishing  
town or out-of-the-way village, for in  
regard to their whitewash these are still  
in the mediæval period, and Gothic  
London was much more like a great  
village than it was like the present fifty  
square miles of solid building and paving  
stones. Some of the larger houses were  
splendid stone buildings standing over  
vaulted crypts. The smaller houses  
were also of stone, of timber framing,  
or even of clay walling; the roofs were  
of red tiles. The best general idea of  
London before the fire may be obtained  
in a coloured drawing of 1588 by  
Smith the 'Rouge Dragon.' Here the  
red roofs, white walls, and lead spires  
are the predominating characteristics.

I should like to explore the old city

further ; to look into St. Paul's, a great Of Beautiful  
avenue of stone, twenty-five arches long ; Cities  
to remark the reredos of enamel, the  
green porphyry pavement of the choir ;  
to inspect the wonderful chapter-house  
and cloisters, two stories high. If we  
rightly timed our visit, we should see a  
chorister in the guise of an angel censuring  
the church.

Leaving St. Paul's Churchyard by the  
north-east archway in its enclosing wall,  
we should pass St. Paul's Cross and  
the isolated belfry before referred to.  
According to Dugdale and Stow, this  
tower is mentioned as early as Henry I.  
In it hung the heaviest bells in the city,  
and when the people assembled below it  
in folkmote, they were summoned by  
these bells. In an interesting article on  
such belfries in France, Viollet le Duc  
says :—‘ When, in the eleventh century,  
the first *communes* were established, they

Of Beautiful assembled at the sound of the bell.  
Cities From the end of the twelfth century towers called *beffrois* were built for the town bells exclusively, visible signs of the franchise of the commune. Later, the belfry was united to the Maison de Ville, the municipal prison. But few of these "monuments of the liberty of the people" still exist in France. From these belfries rang out the hours of labour and of rest, the curfew and the firebell. The belfry was for a long time the only town hall, the "municipal monument *par excellence*." The 'Bell-house' by St. Paul's, which was such a symbol of corporate citizenship, has been strangely overlooked.

Then we would go out into Cheap (in early documents called the Forum), and see the craftsmen's shops and the new Guildhall, rebuilt about 1336; or, leaving Ludgate, with a glance at its



sculptured kings, pass along the Strand Of Beautiful  
by the waterside towers and palaces; Cities  
by the Temple and Henry the Third's  
House of Jews (destroyed this year,  
1896, by the Keepers of Public Records),  
till we came to the lovely Eleanor Cross  
at Charing, and at last to Westminster,  
where the immense new roof is just  
being erected over the old Norman hall  
of the king's palace, and the workmen,  
under Henry Yevele, the great master-  
mason of the time, are at work on the  
nave of the Church. Happy should we be  
if we had met some pageant of the Guild  
Companies on our way; or seen the  
people go a-maying, 'when every man,  
except impediment, would walk into the  
sweet meadows and green woods, there  
to rejoice their spirits with the beauty  
and savour of sweet flowers, and with  
the harmony of the birds.' On this  
May-day too, I think, we might have

Of Beautiful Cities heard the voices of the choir of singers filtering through the air from St. Paul's steeple. Such, in briefest, was Gothic London; such were the notions of masons and carpenters as to a city worth looking at and living in.

I cannot stay, nor have I the will, to follow the history of London after the fire. As rebuilt by Wren, it was fine enough, but all romance had gone; scholarship had superseded living art. Instead of beauty that all understood and enjoyed, a pretentious and unrealisable grandeur was aimed at. The age of Dons had set in.

This time is best represented by the suburban houses and gardens, pleasant enough places for those who could afford such islands of comfort round a sea of Hogarthian misery. The houses, it is true, were but prosaic square boxes of brick, with a few tags of Latin

‘ornaments’ inserted here and there, and the life was a somewhat thin gentility congruous with Sheraton furniture, Sheffield plate, and Chelsea china. Still, the gardens were nice, especially the blossoming trees—limes, chestnuts, acacias, tulip-trees, catalpas and magnolias, mulberry and medlar, whitethorn, lilac, and syringa.

Coming to modern London, I must confess that my heart fails me at the enormousness—the enormity—of it. A half-hundred square miles, once wood and cornland, roofed over, where we grow sickly like grass under a stone, intersected by interminable avenues all asphalt, lamp-posts, pipes and wires: a coil of underground labyrinth which Dante might have added to his world of torment—the Inner Circle: a gloomy sky above, from which falls a sticky slime of soot: public pageantry reduced to the two shows of the 5th and 9th of

Of Beautiful Cities    November : gardens which seem to imitate stamped zinc—such are the characteristics of modern London.

Little good it serves to wail or rail, yet at times the most of us must shiver with despair, and examine chances of escape like creatures untamed to a cage, longing for the time when the weeds and flowers biding their time under the paving-stones will again expand to the rains and wave in the breezes. Away, however, with fear or false hopes, delusions and illusions ! The time will surely come when men will tire of perfecting means to mean ends—the wasting of life for the killing of joy. Surely these telegraph ropes and iron bridges need only exist as long as they amuse people.

Meantime, ideals must be translated into the bald prose of betterment. And here, indeed, there is much of good hope

if we will only recognise how ugly London is, even amongst modern cities, and clear ourselves of the notion that just *it* is normal, and that everything is funny which isn't like Oxford Street or Mile End Road.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

First of everything, I think we require some accessible and authoritative history of London, and especially of the mediæval period, which has been so overlaid by the annals of the coffee-houses and playhouses.

Paris has a worthy history in Hoffbauer's fine folios, in which the early city is reconstructed step by step. If we are to have good citizens, we must teach a tradition of citizenship in our schools, as in the army the men are instructed in the traditions of their regiment. I would have a series of historical maps built up, one over the other, showing the growth of the city

Of Beautiful Cities from Roman days, accompanied by eight or ten handbooks—the best that might be made, in the spirit of Mr. Ruskin's *Our Fathers have told us*—treating, say, of such subjects as :—(1) Pre-Conquest London ; (2) Old St. Paul's ; (3) Mediæval London ; (4) The Monasteries ; (5) The Craft Guilds ; (6) Westminster ; (7) Pageants and City Life. If only the County Council could subsidise the French Government to undertake a history of London !

We should approach the question of the beautifying of London from the side of tidying up of necessary work : there is little hope just now of Art produced with malice aforethought. We must, above all, get rid of the grandeur idea of Art. We have only to go to Vienna to see what modern mechanical grandeur will do for a city. Art is but the garment of life. It is the well doing of

what needs doing. Art is not the pride of the eye and the purse, it is a link with the child-spirit and the child-ages of the world. The Greek drama grew up out of the village dance; the Greek theatre was developed from the stone-paved circles where the dances took place. If we gathered the children who now dance at the street corners into some better dancing-grounds, might we not hope for a new music, a new drama, and a new architecture?

Unless there is a ground of beauty, vain it is to expect the fruit of beauty. Failing the spirit of Art, it is futile to attempt to leaven this huge mass of 'man styres' by erecting specimens of architect's architecture, and dumping down statues of people in cocked hats.

We should begin on the humblest plane by sweeping streets better, washing and whitewashing the houses, and taking

Of Beautiful Cities care that such railings and lamp-posts as are required are good lamp-posts and railings, the work of the best artists attainable.

It were easy to take a map of London, and marking on it a few important buildings, strike avenues across it *à la* Haussmann,—easy and vain. Repudiating, as I do, all idea of grandifying London at a *coup*, or to any great extent formalising it, I am certain that, before it can be thought of as a whole—a city—there must be some sort of more or less actual, or sentimental, order and unity given to it. [Merely a central red dot on a map, with a circle of so many miles radius having some more dignified association than cab fares, would be a comfort to one.] At present, London is as structureless as one of its own fogs.

In counting up the great primary facts of London, the magnificent curve



of the river from Westminster to London Bridge comes first. One end of this, our Golden Horn—or, rather, Golden Bow—rests at St. Paul's, the acropolis of the old city; the other end is at Westminster Abbey, the lovely Gothic church of the seat of government. Waterloo Bridge, which is quite the most splendid modern monument we have, accurately bisects the river front, which, moreover, has been very respectably embanked. Our great representative building of Central London is the British Museum, which stands at the apex of a triangle on the base given by St. Paul's and Westminster. This triangle, resting on the river, with its angles at St. Paul's, the Abbey, and the Museum, comprises Central London. By a most remarkable chance, the line of Waterloo Bridge, carried northward, heads straight for the façade of the

Of Beautiful Cities Museum, and southwards, is continued to the Obelisk, the point of the star of roads of South London. This line is the axis of modern London. Making an avenue from Waterloo Bridge to the Museum would alone almost give an organic system to London. Such an avenue should be wisely extravagant, wide, full of trees, and preserved from carriage traffic, for which, indeed, it would be too steep. It would open up the river to the heart of London, and, properly managed, it would be easy, by reason of its steepness, to make the river visible from any part of it, even from the steps of the Museum. The river is now as nearly as possible wasted to us, whereas the blue of it, with the passing traffic in summer, and the wheeling gulls in winter, might furnish delight unending.

The short alleys opening from the

Strand to the Thames should also be widened so as to give recurring sights of the river. Our main avenue, with its freedom from vulgar traffic, should be a Sacred Way, a place of fountains and trees, where statues might be erected to the 'Fortune of the City,' and to the city fathers—Erkenwald, our forgotten saint; Mayors Fitz-Alwin, Fitz-Thomas, and Walter Hervey; Bishop Braybrook; Stow, the humble chronicler; Chaucer; Wren, the first and last 'great' architect.

All attempts to make such an avenue an artery for cabs and omnibuses would be worse than useless, and would only lead to the destruction of Waterloo Bridge as inadequate for increased traffic, and the substitution for it of some monstrosity in rolled steel and red paint. Waterloo Bridge as it stands is second in importance only to St. Paul's, and must be preserved at any cost and sacrifice.

Of Beautiful  
Cities

Of Beautiful  
Cities

At the head of the avenue the Museum should be opened out to Oxford Street, forming a good big space into which would jut Hawksmoor's church. Here also should stand the Egyptian monument now on the Embankment. Where the road intersected the Strand, a monumental stone might be placed for Golden Milestone and Omphalos of the city and the world.

Once grant the existence of such a half-mile of avenue, done with sufficient nobility of purpose, and all future improvements would certainly fall into place, without any large and violent change in the direction of the streets which have grown up along the courses of bridle roads and field paths. For instance, whenever—if ever—civilisation is carried to South London, some improvements would be devised having relation to this axial line. Possibly a

fine street, across the chord of the river's course, linking two bridge-ends, might ultimately become the direct line of passage from east to west.

We have seen that the north bank of the river bow is embanked from Westminster to Blackfriars. If a similar embankment were completed on the south side, a ring of river-front exercise ground would be opened up hardly to be matched in any city of Europe.

Round about this area of Central London stand the railway stations, places now of indescribable shabbiness and squalor, but capable of suggesting something to the imagination. They are the great gates of the greater roads—portals to the outer world.

Finally, a dividing off of London from non-London is essential. We must all have wished for some 'reservation,' and I have heard it suggested

Of Beautiful Cities that a zone embracing Richmond Park, Putney, Wimbledon, and so on, is even now a possibility. Most of such a belt might be made use of as fruitful garden ground; but somewhere here I should like a quiet street of tombs, where the more distinguished dead might lie, whose names were otherwise recorded in the names of the streets.

Be all this as it may, a new and better London can only be completed as old Rome was founded — by turning a plough trench round about it.

III  
OF THE DECORATION  
OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS  
WALTER CRANE





## OF THE DECORATION OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS

THERE are, apparently, two theories or decoration in buildings: one might be termed the *organic* theory, in which the decoration is an essential and integral part of the structure, to which it gives final expression; and the other, the *inorganic* theory, in which decoration is considered merely as so much super-added or surface ornament, and often not so much to emphasise as to conceal structure, or to furnish a mask for it.

In the Greek (Doric) temple, the

sublimated form—or perhaps the prototype—of the Greek house, following in stone the tradition of primitive wooden structure, certain spaces naturally occurred—such as the spaces between the angle of the pediment and the horizontal lintel, and between the triglyphs or beam ends, and these spaces were appropriately filled with sculptured slabs which served at once the structural function of closing the apertures and enriching and relieving the building with expressive sculpture.

With the development of Gothic architecture, sculptured decoration (as indeed decoration of all kinds) became more and more important, while still strictly organic, being used to emphasise structural necessities such as the ribs and functions of interior vaults, the caps of the clustered shafts, the tracery of windows, as well as the spandrels of

arches, corbels, arcades, canopies, pinnacles, parapets, stringcourses, gargoyles, and recessed and canopied tombs built into the interior walls of churches.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

One cannot separate the decorative features of a Gothic building from its structure. It is an organic part of it, as the leaves and flowers are of a tree.

The sculpture of a Doric temple is also organic, as we have seen, though on a different principle, the ornamental emphasis being on the *interstices* of the structure rather than on the constructive features themselves, as in the Gothic.

In the course of social and architectural evolution, however, we have become somewhat mixed and composite in our architectural styles. With complexity of life complexity of form and arrangement have increased, and the result is that modern buildings have lost to a great extent that impressiveness

which is due to simplicity, and that organic character or relation between structure and decoration which I have endeavoured to indicate.

We live in a huge architectural conglomerate, an amalgam of many industrial and residential districts pressing around what was once the city of London compact within its walls. In this conglomerate traces of every period are found, back to the Roman foundation, and each succeeding period has left an increasingly important architectural deposit, until our own century, which has been more destructive than the great fire as regards old London, in new London (though tempered by scattered designs of refined and eclectic architects) is more suggestive of the activity of the modern builder and contractor than of noble architecture and thoughtful and expressive decoration.

There seems to have been a constant endeavour with architects and builders, since Sir Christopher Wren, to reconcile the classical pediment and pilaster with public, domestic, and street architecture: to design imposing façades of Greek and Roman temples and then brick up the portico and cut windows in it: to repeat the pediment over every window, and to make a Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, or composite portico on every door.

This classical taste has left its mark on London. Purest, perhaps, in the neighbourhood of Regent's Park, you can trace it down the severe reserve of Gower Street, to the gloomy Doric dignity of the peristyle of the British Museum, and from the stucco mansions of South Kensington, to more and more debased forms in all the suburbs, corrected here and there by an infusion of that happier, more adaptable, domestic,

and certainly ruddier 'Dutch mixture,' known as Queen Anne.

Here and there a gable from Bruges, a Tudor casement, a window from Fontainebleau, or Hampton Court, may nod at you or lead your thoughts astray; but, sooner or later, you are bound to meet the real, up-to-date, modern commercial street building, a really 'handsome' one, where the constructive work is entirely done by the steel framing, fantastically masked with playful and flamboyant designs in terracotta, heightened with glass mosaic, cheap stained glass, and iron work—the whole mass apparently supported upon sheets of plate glass. Unto this favour we have come! The acme of inorganic decoration.

After such triumphs of art the cliff dwellings of the many-storied flat, or the cloud-capped altitudes of the

monster hotel scarcely move one — except perhaps to stand from under in case of their tumbling down.

Now we may consider this subject of the decoration of public buildings from several different points of view, as, for instance :—

1. From the point of view of public sentiment and national character and ideals.

2. Or, as the expression of the design, object, and purpose of particular buildings, interior and exterior.

3. From the technical point of view of methods and materials, and adaptation to climate and conditions.

Firstly, then, as public sentiment is formed, presumably, from the aggregation of its unit, in the mind and heart of the private citizen, some index may be gathered from the life and feeling of the typical individual, as far as it may

be articulate, which forms the dominant mass of the nation: for the typical character of the man will be determined by the typical character of the unit.

We are often credited with being a reserved race, somewhat sombre even in our pleasures; clinging to fixed habits and traditions; averse from outward display; self-conscious; distinguished more for business qualities than lively imagination, and possessing an eye more generally fixed upon the main chance than upon mural decoration; a heart for material prosperity rather than spiritual beauty.

Well, let us ask ourselves whether the general aspect of our big towns does not on the whole suggest or reflect, in the character of their public as well as private buildings, such characteristics, so far as they are capable of being expressed in architectural design.



One must allow of course something for locality, for even the railway has not yet succeeded in altogether obliterating local varieties—in spite of blue slate.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

Then too, happily, there are still left, here and there, survivals of another age (and presumably of a different type of Englishman) in most of our towns in the shape of buildings full of historical associations, and haunted with the romance of a past age, the outcome of a different spirit and different conditions. But, as we have seen, our century of machine industry and commercial competition has done more to obliterate the past in our cities than any former one ; and the new developments of mechanical and material resource which modern scientific invention has brought in, too rapidly succeed each other, or are too rapidly modified, to be perfectly adapted and united to harmonious form by

artistic invention, which is a much slower growth, and owes much of its charm to tradition and association.

In the adaptation of light to modern buildings (which may be considered an important part of their decoration, or an adjunct to it), we may see an instance of what I mean. Centuries of use had thoroughly united the old system of oil-lamps and candles, lanterns, or cressets, and torch-holders, with charming and appropriate form in metal. Some half century or more ago gas was introduced, and demanded new adaptation of form from the designer in its mountings. The demand was too rapid for mature and well-considered forms. The bare tube or tubular bracket with the turn-tap burner was all that the thing actually needed, and anything superadded was apt to take the unfortunate look of ornamental excrescence, because really

unrelated and inorganic. The monstrosity known as the 'gasalier' rooted itself in the private and public ceiling.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

No sooner was the world partially reconciled to the fearful but convenient gas-fitting, than the electric light came along and again dislocated the ideas of the commercial designer, who for the most part took the traditional course of combining the new invention with the old forms; and the heavy tubular forms of gas and candelabra fitting were playfully used to hold or support the light wire and electric torch, which, in its simplest form of pendent string and incandescent, pear-shaped glass, has a certain elegance and suggestiveness, and at the most only needs suspension and protection by metal fittings of proportional lightness.

Something of this kind of difficulty of organic adaptation has beset the

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

architect and the decorative artist ever since the demands of utility and beauty became distinct, and natural growth in design became choked with archæology, pedantry and authority, or simply extinguished in the rush of commercial competition and utilitarianism. The well-worn pattern-book of classic, or Gothic, or Renaissance forms has been freely consulted, and constant endeavours have been made to make the old architectural clothes, irrespective of climatic origin and adaptability, fit the collective and complex wants of the modern citizen, who not so long since was at least firmly persuaded that nothing looked so dignified ('imposing,' I believe, is the right word) as a Greek or Roman pediment or colonnade for a public building. Whoever has seen the temples of Athens and Rome bathed in the broad and lasting sunshine of Greece

and Italy, must feel convinced of the unsuitability of such types of architecture to our damp and foggy climate.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

However, classical education gave us our Bank of England and Royal Exchange.

‘The lines on the Bank *may* be typical of accounts,’ quietly remarks John Ruskin. Let us hope so. The Royal Exchange is more definite. The legend upon the entablature of its classical pediment usefully reminds us that ‘the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof,’ which might perhaps be in some danger of being forgotten, considering the power of the financier and the value of sites in the neighbourhood. The pediment is filled with a sculptured representation of a somewhat unemotional exchange of commodities from different parts of the earth, presided over by Britannia. From all accounts, the

reality it covers is hardly so decorous. Probably the professional, picturesque symbolism of Bulls and Bears would be nearer the mark, and likewise be better understood of the people, if expressed in an appropriate frieze upon this temple of our destinies.

Classical columns again confront us upon the Lord Mayor's mansion, no doubt to suggest the dignity of the pillars of society so often and so splendidly entertained within; but for any suggestion of mediæval richness and historic association one must go to the old Guildhall, with its rich, open-timbered roof.

Passing westward, Wren's masterpiece, our great pagan-Christian Cathedral, compels the admiration due to wonderful structure and magnificent proportions on a great scale, though the cross upon the summit of the dome is the only

symbol to denote to what power it is dedicated.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

Inside it has been the field for modern experiments in decoration, though one would say few buildings seem to require additional ornament less. To concede that any decoration placed there is entirely successful, would be to ignore the impossibility of the work of one age of being perfectly united to, or harmonious with, the work of another, when neither belongs to a period of natural growth and that organic development which characterises a living style.

By far the most important recent experiment in interior decoration on a large scale in this country has been Mr. W. B. Richmond's mosaic scheme in the choir, and whatever view one may take of the advisability, or otherwise, of attempting to decorate buildings of a past age, it must be conceded that the

scheme is thoughtful and comprehensive and the designs are rich and ably composed in the spaces, and that great credit is due to the artist and his assistants for the spirit and method in which the work has been done—setting the cubes of glass in on the surface, and thus getting that variety, lustre, and brilliancy we admire in the old work.

The defects are those inseparable from habits of work the reverse of monumental, as well as the difficulty of harmony with the building as aforesaid, and the difficulties of working on an unaccustomed scale—a scale, indeed, which seems to demand heraldic boldness and directness of design, with extreme breadth and simplicity of treatment, both of form and colour, relying almost entirely upon great masses, and frank silhouetting upon gold.

English Law asserts its dignity in a



vast fortress in thirteenth century Gothic style at Temple Bar—the work of an extremely able and learned architect. As regards this and the Knightsbridge Barracks, it was said that ‘we make a civil building like a mediæval fortress, and we house our military in a civil building.’ Still, as I suppose the real power is with the law which has to be set in motion first, and which controls the military arm, there may be some excuse for such an anomaly.

An insignificant trophy of arms over one of the gates is all the decorative allusiveness allowed upon the barracks—unless the large spherical stones upon the piers of the wall and gateposts of the officers’ quarters are intended to suggest cannon-balls.

This plainness is perhaps compensated for by the expensive and splendid living decorations on guard at the Horse Guards.

So far, the national temper of reserve has been most in evidence as to external decoration; and even at Westminster, at the great national Speech-House, we must go inside to see the important decorations—unless we count the great towers, and it may be said that towers are perhaps the chiefest of means of decorating externally a building or a city.

What, for instance, would Florence be without the Tower of the Signoria? or that noble group formed by it and its neighbours, Giotto's Tower and Duomo? When we think of Florence we think of this central group of buildings by which, through all changes, it maintains its wonderful character and beauty among the cities of the world.

Well, here in our Houses of Parliament some of our painters have been called in, with very various results in

mural painting; and though serious and able work has been done by individual artists like Dyce and Maclise, there seems to have been rather a want of a concerted scheme in the choice and sequence of subjects, which, had they been selected a decade or two later, might have been more in the spirit of John Richard Green's *Short History of the English People*. One would have liked more work of our revered veteran painter, Mr. Watts, there;—his lofty epic and poetic mood, his figurative, typical, and symbolic feeling, so rare in modern art, being peculiarly adapted to great mural work.

One of the finest things there as a piece of decoration, to my mind, is Mr. Poynter's St. George, in the outer hall of the House of Commons.

Let us hope St. George is still in the councils of England, and not merely on

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

the back of her gold piece. He slew dragons and restored ravaged lands to their rightful owners. I should not like to picture him using Maxim guns and dynamite against half-armed African tribes fighting for their territory and independence. If the English people countenance such proceedings, I hope, at least, St. George has nothing to do with them.

In the stillness and solemn light and mystery of the great Abbey we may recover that sense of unity and repose too often disturbed in modern buildings. It is there, if anywhere, we may—

‘Forget six counties overhung with smoke,  
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,’

even as our lost poet and craftsman, William Morris, bade us in the introduction to *The Earthly Paradise*. It is there, under the vaulting that has covered so many generations, that

enshrines so much of our history, the resting-place of so many great Englishmen, we feel the collective impersonal spirit, as well as the pride of race and love of country, as we feel and see the work of many minds and many hands, the skill and imagination of many generations of artist craftsmen speaking to us from the carved stone and wood, when architecture and decoration were one. And then we may reflect that this splendour and dignity was the growth of an age when England was a comparatively small and poor country.

Unity of sentiment, solemnity, splendour,—these should be the dominant qualities in the artistic expression of great public buildings.

Not that lighter and more playful moods have no place even in cathedrals, which above all are intensely human. The whimsicality, gaiety, and humour

of the carver plays about them here and there, in the carvings of the choir stalls, under the *miserere* seats, coming out in all sorts of quaint imaginings, as he sports in the flowers of the capitals, or with the gargoyles of the roof. The heraldic designers, too, who furnished so large and important a part of the decoration of mediæval buildings, both within and without, were no stiff and dry pedants, but full of romance and pretty fancy, freely using badges and bearings as ornaments, and playing with a rebus for a name, or an emblem or posy.

Yet they could be full of dignity and pride on occasion ; over the gates of castles, for instance, and the gates of cities, to impress the approaching stranger or guest.

We have largely lost the true significance of heraldry and its decorative use,

with its petrification into a code of rules.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

And yet the love of a badge or emblem is not extinct. National enthusiasm is soon evoked by a flag; and bunting, with its extremely abstract symbolism, remains the most popular form of at least temporary decoration of streets and public buildings, and at any rate nothing gives so much gaiety, colour, and movement, as fluttering banners and pennons. The spirit has not changed though the forms have, and it must be said, in heraldry, since the Middle Ages, greatly for the worse. The Plantagenet lion on the standard is not the plucky and spirited and, withal, highly decorative beast that he was in Edward the Third's time.

Yet it would be no bad thing for our streets, if, with the revival of design, each house should bear its

distinctive badge, and not merely a little smoky fire insurance plate. It is a good practice, too, to place recording tablets upon houses of historic interest—the birthplaces of notable people. It is at least educational, and tends to foster local interest in local buildings. They might take highly interesting, if simple, forms in the hands of good artists. Name-plates and signs of all kinds are capable of charming treatment, and add much to the interest of streets.

To return to the monuments of modern London.

More determined and elaborate efforts in exterior decoration are seen in the Albert Hall and the Albert Memorial. There are good points in the encaustic frieze of the former, which really helps to express the building, though the groups are of very various merit.

Mr. Armstead's sculptured reliefs of



artists on the plinth of the Memorial, are the most decorative and lifelike things in design in that ornate structure ; but the conception as a whole, as of a gilded shrine emerging from lumps of white marble, is not altogether happy.

The building containing the finest decorations in London, is, after all, the National Gallery ; but there they are in the form of choice pictures, chiefly of the Italian school and Flemish schools, and do not form part of a concerted scheme. But a picture, after all, *may* be the finest piece of decoration in the world.

There are terra-cotta animals on the Natural History Museum (which suggest the stuffed ones within), and stone lions at the gate of the Imperial Institute, apparently waiting for suggestions as to a use for that building. South Kensington Museum, with its untold

treasury of decorative art, yet waits for a fitting roof-tree.

Nothing, however, is more remarkable, and sometimes apparently unaccountable, than the change of direction of interest in the arts. It is as if the centre of social gravity shifted from age to age, and as forms of art, being evolved out of, or rather being the expression of, social life, shift and change with it.

The decoration of public buildings should be the highest form of popular art, as it was in the Middle Ages, when a town-hall, or church, was no bad equivalent for a public library storied with legends and symbols—histories, as they were, which impressed themselves upon the unlettered, through the vivid language of design.

At present, the highest form of popular art appears to be the poster,

which, if it does not always *decorate* our buildings, at least often *covers* them. The hoarding is the really public picture-gallery, and many clever artists contribute to it. Some have shown a thorough understanding of the treatment proper to bold mural work produced by simple means, but very few seem to be aware of the decorative value of lettering, which is often vulgar, coarse, and debased. The worth of the poster as a field for design is the essentially vulgar idea with which it is hopelessly connected, of pushing somebody's wares. If it does not push or shout it cannot have much commercial value, presumably: and then, too, each poster is intended to destroy its neighbour; thus, though you may get a clever individual design, you cannot get a combined decorative effect upon the present principles of posting a hoarding. A figure

designed for height and distance, too, is often put upon the eye line.

Still, as to hanging, it is not so very different in principle to the average picture show, where widely divergent styles, motives, and scales, are jostled together on the same wall.

We waste artistic talent upon the lively but ephemeral poster and newspaper, which to-day are on the hoarding, or the breakfast-table, and to-morrow are trampled under foot of man, while not infrequently dull-as-ditchwater work is perpetuated in public buildings and places in substantial and expensive materials. The fact that there are collectors of posters, and that they are reduced by photography to the level of the drawing-room table, hardly compensates.

It would be better to concentrate public announcements in the form of

posters and bills on particular places on buildings, where they might be arranged in panels according to subject and scale, instead of making every building in progress a public waste-paper basket.

The modern advertiser has evidently laid to heart Thackeray's sarcastic advice to the seeker after good society—'Never mind being obtrusive, so long as you obtrude.'

In our search for modern decoration which is not only part of the architectural expression of a building, but also expressive of its object and purpose, we may go far. Perhaps the new development of municipal life and spirit in our towns may do something towards it, by fostering a sense of citizenship and local pride, and centralising and giving organic life and purpose to the vast jungles of bricks and mortar we call cities, or districts. We seem to

have reached a period of development when street improvements generally take the form of clearances for traffic. Primitive man began with clearings in the forest, and built his hut; civilised man, too, has to begin again with clearings—but in a forest of buildings.

Our municipalities and vestries are apparently too much absorbed in the fundamental difficulties of contracts and the necessities of drainage, paving, and lighting of vast and populous areas, to have time for the cultivation or consideration of external structural beauty in our streets and buildings. These ought they to have done, but not to leave the other undone.

There are no artists elected on committees of county councils, because, we are told, there are no artists on public bodies from which these are chosen. The pursuit of art and the business of public

life are very difficult to reconcile, no doubt ; but at least in matters of art education, and its organisation, their aid has recently been sought.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

The private citizen of any taste or refinement desires his house to be healthy and complete in every part, and would consider it barbaric not to endeavour to satisfy the eye also, or the sense of comfort, even, would not be complete. So the collective citizen should not be content with the organisation of the ordinary fundamental needs and utilities (important as they are, and far as they still are from *some* citizens' reach), but when these have been secured, should seek some higher and more comprehensive means for the expression of the aims and ideals of the community which should satisfy its needs, while stimulating the imagination and uniting its sentiment.

The history and legends of localities should be carefully preserved, and identified with the public buildings—town-halls, schools, hospitals, churches, and meeting-places of all kinds. We might then at least get some public compensation for the public loss of beautiful and historic spots obliterated by the spreading of the town, and the jerry builder.

One of the best modern recent public buildings I have seen is the *new Public Library at Boston, Massachusetts*. The design was broad and simple, of more or less Lombardic origin; a long, low-pitched roof, a façade of white stone, enclosing a court, with a range of round-headed windows; the arms of the city designed by a good sculptor over the porch, and above the windows a series of the symbolical marks of the famous printers—Aldus, Caxton, and so on



—in a kind of black inlay in circles. Inside, important mural decorations by Puvis de Chavannes, John S. Sargent, and E. A. Abbey, some of which have been seen in this country. A pleasant form of international rivalry might be found in the development of national ideals and taste in public buildings—and it would cost less than ironclads.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

One of the best, most characteristic, and appropriate pieces of decoration which has been done in our times, is the series of mural paintings illustrating the history of Manchester, in the Town Hall of that city, by Ford Madox Brown, who was certainly one of the most English and original of our modern painters.

Here we have a series of wall pictures giving not only a general history of Manchester, but a history of England, almost, in typical scenes from different

periods, from the building of the Roman fort to the trial of Wycliffe, and, on the other side, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Among the works of the same artist in the south room of the recent Arts and Crafts Exhibition might have been seen the full-size cartoon for one of these frescoes—The Baptism of King Edgar—and one of the finest. It is full of the painter's remarkable dramatic and intellectual grasp, and that freshness and directness of conception and composition which gives one the impression of his having been an eye-witness of the scene he represents. His fine choice of suggestive accessory, and use of subsidiary incident, as well as his fine decorative and mural feeling combined with immense energy, humour, and vigour, is seen in the drawing of another of the frescoes—The Expulsion of the Danes.

There was a small drawing also, in the same Exhibition, of the fresco of the chemical discoverer, John Dalton, experimenting with a pole in a pond in search of marsh gases, while a country boy is set to catch the bubbles in a bottle—giving rise to the children's idea that he was 'catching Will o' the Wisps.'

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

This is one of the pictures upon the wall opposite to the earliest mediæval subjects, where are given other incidents in the lives of various inventors and benefactors associated with Manchester: such as Sir Thomas Chetham, in the court of the old monastic building called Chetham's Hospital, which still exists, in which he founded a public library; Crabtree the draper discovering the transit of Venus; the inventor of the spinning jenny escaping from the factory people, who only saw their employment going. The windows of the hall come

down too low, and rather interfere with the effect of the pictures ; but, in spite of drawbacks, they form, as a series, a very fine and original decoration, and one entirely suited to the purpose and position of the building.

If every municipality would do likewise, we should soon have an English school of mural painting, as well as a painted local and social history of England.

It is opportunity that is wanted. Our painters mostly work for the dealer or private buyer, and on a comparatively small scale, and have, as a rule, but few chances of cultivating what feeling they may have for large mural work, in which command is not obtained all at once ; and we must certainly take to the water before we can learn to swim.

I believe in France young painters who distinguish themselves at Paris, are

often encouraged by being commissioned to paint for the public buildings of their native town. A very good notion.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

In Birmingham something is being done in this direction, by setting some of the students of the Municipal Art School to work for the municipal buildings.

I may here mention a remarkable piece of mural painting now in progress in London in a building—a chapel which is intended, not for service, but simply as a quiet place for meditation, for any one weary of the rush and roar of London streets.

A chapel of Byzantine form has been built by Mr. Herbert P. Horne upon the site of an old Georgian one, not far from the marble arch on the Bayswater Road. Owing to the munificence of a lady—the late Mrs. Russell Gurney—Mr. F. J. Shields has been at

work some time on a scheme of pictorial decoration covering the whole of the interior of the chapel. It is not yet complete, but sufficiently so to show the thought, invention, and significant symbolism, combined with a fine sense of composition and linear and colour-expression, which the artist has put into his work. The scheme of subjects comprehends the chief events and personages in the Biblical story, presented as a typical and connected whole, and as the exponents of the Christian faith, and bears the stamp in every part of the strong individuality and personal conviction of the artist. It is seldom in our time that an entire interior is decorated by painting, and that the work is that of a single artist. It recalls the days of Giotto and his typical mural work at Padua and Assisi.

Churches, from time immemorial, as

the most sacred of public buildings and as the collective and typical houses of the people, have been the recipients of untold treasures of art and craftsmanship of every kind, and still seem to make the greatest and most permanent demands upon, and to offer the largest opportunities to, the designer. Apart from its spiritual suggestion and purpose, one reason may be that the Gothic church retains the simpler form and arrangement of the typical mediæval dwelling—the great hall, or nave, with the raised daïs at the end. Walls, screens, windows, desks and seats, being considered parts of the building, all lend themselves to artistic treatment.

If we built churches in the same spirit in which they were built in the Middle Ages—that is to say, in strict relation to contemporary habits and sentiment,—not that I must be under-

stood to advise it, however,—we should make our churches resemble our reception or drawing-rooms, only on a greater scale. The joinery introduced in the last century with its room-like, high-panelled pews furnished with stools and cushions, showed an approach to contemporary domestic treatment and sentiment ; but, curiously enough, in an age of increased domestic luxury, we have reverted to the primitive severer type in our churches.

There is another sort of public building of ever-increasing importance, however, which might well take some thought and work of the artist—I mean the *school*. Here, again, permanent mural design might find a home and fill an important part in stimulating and cultivating the imagination, informing the mind, and unifying sentiment under the spell of association



by means of painted histories and typical figures.

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

Every child might grow up under the influence of typical pictures giving to the eye a complete conception of the universe, as it might by means of large coloured mural simple designs be led through the prehistoric ages, and the physical changes of the earth, with their typical plants and animals; the procession of the seasons and the fundamental agricultural labours of man; the stars in their courses; and, from his first beginnings, to follow man's progress and the evolution of social life; the notable epochs of history; the notable men and women; the typical pursuits and ideas of each age; the outward habit and show of many-coloured life, like a moving pageant through the glow or gloom of passing centuries; the noble deeds of the past; the achievements of

human labour and invention; the history of art and letters—all these things might be associated with school life, and impressed upon young minds by the unforgettable language of line and colour on the school walls. Surely such influences would tend to lighten the labours of the teacher as well as to enrich and ennoble life, and make better citizens in the end.

In the meantime, something is being done in a quiet and inexpensive way by means of printed pictures coloured by hand, which are issued by the Fitzroy Picture Society. These are tasteful and decorative, being typical and mural in treatment, and well calculated to relieve the dulness of the average school-room, and give them a touch of imagination.

I can now only briefly touch the subject under my third head—the point of view of methods and materials.

For the decoration of public buildings the principal means and materials are sculpture—marble or stone—modelling in terra-cotta or bronze, mosaic, marble and glass ; stained and painted glass, leading and lead work, metal and iron work, cut brick, sgraffito, wood-carving, painting, oil, fresco and tempera ; plaster, stucco and gesso ; tile work and glazed faience ; and, for interiors, one might add wood panelling, inlays, and tapestry.

The selection of materials must be governed by considerations of suitability to climate, to locality, position, and definite material conditions generally, which indeed should govern all vital architectural design, for out of such have grown what we call the historic styles, which cannot be rashly imported from one country to another, or used as masks for all sorts of different

requirements without loss of meaning, confusion, and degradation.

We must guard, too, against the idea that ornament is necessarily decoration. We may have simple buildings with hardly any ornament which are yet decorative, while we may have buildings covered with ornament which are not decorated at all.

Sculpture has been the chief means of decorating European buildings externally, both ancient and modern, and though it has a severe struggle for existence in our towns, what with public apathy and coal smoke, the sculptor remains the chief public decorator, and one still hears of important work from time to time, such as Mr. Sterling Lee's panels on the St. George's Hall, Liverpool; Mr. Hamo Thornycroft's frieze for the Chartered Accountants' building in the City, in which

the sculptor and the architect (Mr. John Belcher) have worked harmoniously together; also Mr. Pomeroy's sculptured reliefs for the new Town Hall at Sheffield. Such works as these at any rate show that we can have sculpture of style and decorative distinction upon our public buildings if we want it.

Terra-cotta seems to wear very well and keep its colour through London smoke, as far as I have observed, and the natural simple colours of the fired clay harmonise well with brick-work.

In exterior colour decoration we have been very tentative and timid, though the return to simple materials like red brick and terra-cotta in architecture suggests a growing feeling for it. If a body and a glaze could be proved to stand the vicissitudes of our damp climate, what decoration could be more cheerful than a frieze in coloured relief

across the front of a street façade, in the spirit of Luca and Andrea della Robbia's noble frieze of the acts of mercy which decorates the Ospedale at Pistoia? (a coloured cast of which may be seen at South Kensington).

In the porch of the cathedral in the same city is a beautiful specimen of the architectural use of the lighter kind of Robbia ware in white, blue, and yellow. A round vault covers the porch, and this is coffered with the ware in panels, the tympanum of the arch over the door being filled with a Madonna and Angels. The sunlight striking upon the pavement illuminates the glazed relief with soft, reflected light, which suggests the true position of work of this kind, which here is in pleasant contrast with the black and white bands of the marble facing of the arcade.

Mr. Conrad Dressler and Mr. Harold Rathbone, each in different ways, are engaged in a notable artistic effort to revive Della Robbia ware and adapt it to modern architectural decoration, and both have done remarkably interesting work in the material. I have seen a charming recessed wall fountain by the former artist which was executed at Mr. Rathbone's works at Birkenhead. The figure panels after Madox Brown by the latter show what delightful colour is possible to be obtained in glazed faience.

I rather think that where Della Robbia ware is used upon a building the building itself must be very simple and light in colour, if not white, and no other kind of decoration must be used. Interior courts and arcades faced with plain white tiles, with a coloured frieze or panels, and pilasters, would be appropriate where light was wanted.

It may be a question whether our climate furnishes enough sunshine to bring out the beauty of the material, but its cleanness of surface is in its favour in regard to our black towns; and one would like to see it freely tried, as it would give us *colour* at least, which is so much needed in our architecture.

As regards mural painting, the old difficulty about fresco in this country need not be an obstacle, as admirable and permanent effects can be obtained in other ways. Even Madox Brown, who used Gambier Parry's method of spirit-fresco for his earlier panels at Manchester, considered that painting in flatted colour on canvas, and having the picture fastened down on the wall panel with white lead, on the French plan, was quite as good for mural work.

Mr. Shields uses this method, but has



the painted canvas panel fastened down upon slabs of slate, with a space between the slate and the body of the wall at the back, so that there is no danger of damp.

Panels of fibrous plaster can also be used perfectly well for mural painting, and even simple tempera painting on plaster is possible, as it can be cleaned perfectly with bread.

Sgraffito is not reliable in our towns for external work, though extensively used in Italy and Germany ; but though limited in range can be made most effective, controlled by taste and decorative feeling. The large designs of Mr. Heywood Sumner give a good idea of its value as interior mural decoration on a large scale.

Glass mosaic is the most splendid material for either external or internal work ; and one might say of mosaic

decoration, as indeed of all other methods, that, where used, it must be dominant, if not exclusive, in the spirit in which it is used at St. Mark's and the churches of Ravenna.

In the decoration of a public building the attention should be centred upon some leading and distinctive feature, and the effect should depend upon the use of one kind of work.

If sculpture is the method, concentrate the interest upon the sculpture. If mosaic, then everything must be subsidiary to it. It does not do to make a building into a pattern-book of styles and methods.

The same principle applies to interior work. If mural painting is to be the centre of interest, clear the stage for it. Do not let stained glass or mosaic or sculpture compete with it. All sorts of arts and crafts may have their place in

subsidiary ways in appropriate fittings, but they should not clamour for attention or disturb the central motive, though they may add to the repose and richness of the façade or the room.

Principles, of course, are nothing without practice; but so far as they go, and speaking generally, I venture to think that it is in the directions I have indicated that we may come nearest to having impressive and beautiful decoration on public buildings.

We cannot get outside our own times. If we do not care for sincerity, harmony, and beauty in our own lives, we shall not get them in our public buildings; if we do not think these qualities important—if we are entirely absorbed in seeking our individual and material prosperity, and are oblivious of the social bond, we are not likely to get noble buildings or impressive decora-

tions ; but we must remember that a people without art, collectively speaking, is inarticulate, and that, after all, the highest, most vital art is the expression of character.

There is a saying attributed to Schiller, that 'Man is not really man until he plays.' The art of a nation may be said to be the outcome of its play, though it is play involving its best energies.

At all events, the only evidence of the character and ideals of the great communities and civilisations of the past is to be found in the relics of their arts. Stamped in the unmistakable characters of design, every age has left the record of its distinctive faith and conception of man's life and the universe, and for the most part upon its public buildings.

The deepest religious symbolism and

typical thought were embodied in ancient and mediæval public buildings, from the heroic embodiment of Greek mythology in the Parthenon pediments to the frescoes of Giotto at Assisi and Padua—typical mural work. We have the impressive sculptured front of Wells Cathedral, the beautiful shrines of Siena and Orvieto (each a varied treasure-house of art both without and within), while a serenity and sweetness akin to the Greek seems to awaken again in the thirteenth century Gothic sculpture at Amiens, Paris, and Auxerre, which also touch ordinary human life and labour.

The modern vision of the evolution of nature, of the stream of human progress flowing ever onwards from its dim prehistoric sources; the great social ideal of a common and interdependent life, involving an unbroken chain of co-operative human labour necessary to

Of the  
Decoration  
of Public  
Buildings

the maintenance of life and the creation of collective wealth with its splendid possibilities; the true relationship of the human family on the earth; the conception of the service of humanity as directing and centralising life and giving it purpose—such themes have yet to be adequately expressed or symbolised in the places where the highest thoughts and aspirations of a people are most fittingly and enduringly expressed—in the design and decoration of noble public buildings.

IV

OF PUBLIC SPACES, PARKS  
AND GARDENS

REGINALD BLOMFIELD





## OF PUBLIC SPACES, PARKS AND GARDENS

THE subject of my paper this evening, Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens, is one, I think, which concerns all of us who have to live in cities. Not only the artist, but every one who passes through the streets, every citizen (and I use the term in its widest sense) has a direct interest in the seemly laying out of his city, in that orderly distribution which is essential to its beauty and dignity.

Yet this subject is one which, in recent years, has been left to lie outside the scope of the arts. It has been treated without regard to principles; and whether the anarchy of ideas that

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens prevails is cause or effect, we have come to accept as inevitable the growing degradation of our public spaces. We spend thought on the inside of our houses, and develop to a fault the insidious instinct of the collector, but the setting of our buildings is still an affair of haphazard, and we seem to have given up, as desperate, the attempt to make the city beautiful as a whole. Slipshod administration is accepted by the public without protest, and the artist, in despair at the intellectual atmosphere that surrounds him, tends more and more to withdraw into himself. The consequence is that we do not get the best ability available. Problems of the greatest artistic difficulty are often settled by amateurs, and the laying out of our streets and public places proceeds on no consecutive system whatever.

Now, in this attitude of mind there is a real danger: the danger that attends the withdrawal of the best intelligence of the country from matters of public importance. And this danger is doubly formidable nowadays, in so far as we have lost touch of that fine tradition which, one hundred and fifty years ago, would have controlled the efforts of the amateur and the less-gifted professional. It would be indeed hard to find, in the recent laying out of our public parks, any principle of design at all, any theory at work as to the kind of place a public park should be, and as to the method of treatment suited to a place of public use, and maintained at the public expense. Again, any one who walks down a modern London street can see at a glance the chaotic state in which the æsthetic of art is at present plunged. It is not simply that good architecture

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens jostles bad, and that there is no attempt at any harmony between the different buildings. It is not even that individualism has run riot. The street may be partly redeemed by a good design here and there, but, as a whole, it expresses nothing but various fashions, it offers no evidence of any sense of tradition, any community of aims and ideals. It is but too evident that art is divorced from our serious existence; it is not thought worthy of the energy and intelligence which we freely devote to politics and business. Art has indeed its well-defined technical limits, but the groundwork of ideas that lies beneath it, cannot be separated from our general attitude to life itself, and it seems that we have not yet got rid of the habit of taking life in sections, of sub-dividing its interests into separate compartments, and overlooking the relationship that

exists between them. We have pushed the sub-division of labour to a vice. The consequence is that the specialist loses sight of all that lies outside his own particular lines, and in so doing loses sight of the end that alone justifies his existence. Architecture, for example, has come to be looked upon as a narrow particular art of detail, not as that wide commanding art whose vision embraces the whole range of human craftsmanship. This larger sense of art which conceives of all the arts as working together for the attainment of beauty, is still far away in the distance. Most of us rest content with the academic view ; we devote some time and perhaps money to the claims of art, and, after this, art is shut out of our existence, and we resume our normal habit, not so much of indifference as of oblivion.

Of Public  
Spaces, Parks  
and Gardens

The point of view, then, from which

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens I venture to approach this subject to-night, is not that of the technical designer. Rather, I shall endeavour to deal with it on a wider basis : taking it for granted that this matter of the design of streets and public spaces is one branch in the family of art, not to be treated as a side issue, but rather as the last touch of civic architecture, as a problem that calls for the patient thought that is necessary to any other expression of the human intelligence.

In his opening lecture on 'Art and Life,' Mr. Sanderson pointed out to you how widespread, and yet intimately connected, are the issues with which art has to deal. Its work is organic,—that is to say, its full expression can only be given by means of a well-considered relation established between the individual parts. It is not enough that an architect should create a fine

building, or the sculptor carve some excellent monument. Further thought and effort are necessary to bring these into relation ; the streets and public places of the city should bind them together into one beautiful whole, so that every part of it works together with every other part for the attainment of beauty. It is in this sense that architecture is architectonic,—the wise mistress who brings order and sanity into chaos, and combines the music of the other arts into one perfect symphony.

Of Public  
Spaces, Parks  
and Gardens

Perhaps at no period of the civilised world has this aspect of architecture been more completely overlooked. In our pride of mechanical invention, we have lost that mature art which is not satisfied with isolated excellence, but seeks to establish a harmony in the immense aggregate of details that go to

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens make up a city. The Athenian of the time of Pericles pursued his work in the midst of the most admirable buildings disposed in that large monumental manner which is of the highest quality of architecture. The last of the great walls between the city and the harbour was completed. Hippodamus of Miletus had laid out the Peiræus in orderly squares and liberal spaces. Far away on the Acropolis gleamed the marble of the Propylæa and the Parthenon, and between them the bronze figure of Athene Promachos seemed to quiver in the splendid light that played round the city of the violet crown. It is a significant fact that, while the other towns of Greece were content with narrow streets and squalid buildings, the fine intelligence of the Athenian expressed itself in the ordered beauty of his city. Here, at least, was a fit



background for the purest art the world has ever seen.

Of Public  
Spaces, Parks  
and Gardens

Different in quality, yet not less impressive in its tremendous power, was the art of the Roman. In the architecture of his cities he introduced a very personal note of his own. His intellect was essentially lucid and clear-sighted. Possibly a poor artist, but at least a magnificent constructor, he laid out his cities on a broad, comprehensive scheme, with ample thoroughfares and public spaces; and no difficulties of engineering or considerations of cost induced him to deviate a hair's-breadth from his monumental plan. He adorned his public spaces with the fairest statuary, and lined the walls of his courts with rare and beautiful marbles. He had, moreover, that habit of grouping his fine buildings in such relation to each other, as that their effect was enhanced

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens instead of being stultified. Even when the fact is discounted that he had slave labour and the resources of the known world at his back, the courage of his expenditure on public works in the adornment of his city makes our own municipal efforts seem little less than contemptible.

The Rome of the Cæsars shows how far we have fallen behind in the handling of great cities. We are proud of our engineering skill, yet there are not many men who could deal with the constructive difficulties of the palace of Caligula. We have absolutely nothing to compare with that sumptuous area of Apollo which stood on the Palatine Hill. It is worth dwelling on this for an instant, if only to stimulate our imagination of what a noble city should be. The area of Apollo was an open court, entered by a lofty marble arch,

and surrounded by a peristyle of fifty-two columns of giallo antico, set against walls of white marble from Luna and Hymettus. Between each pair of columns were statues of the Danaides, and opposite each Danaid an equestrian figure of her murdered bridegroom. In the centre of the court was the Temple of Apollo Palatinus, and in the open space before the temple, an altar surrounded by the four statues of Myron's wondrous oxen. Now all the details of this work were probably beautiful, but the essential fact about it, and the quality which one has to realise, is that its architecture and its sculpture, and their adjustment to the site, were conceived of as a whole, and not piece by piece. The Roman saw that isolated beauty merely makes adjacent hideousness more hideous, that it was folly to plump down a temple or a statue and

Of Public  
Spaces, Parks  
and Gardens

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens leave it to its fate (as has been done, for instance, with St. George's Hall at Liverpool). He knew that, if its full value and effect was to be got, the skill of the artist must be brought to bear on the surroundings, and that these must be welded together into one well-balanced composition. Somehow this masterful habit seems the natural outcome of such a character as the Roman's. It is undoubtedly more easily attained in a society habituated to the ways of imperial administration than in an atmosphere of cross purposes and uncertain system such as exists to-day. Something, too, is due to the habit of life. The Roman spent much of his time and did much of his business in the open, and the area of Apollo was but one among several of these splendid open spaces. The modern Londoner does his business indoors, and, indeed,

is so much immersed in it that he is content to possess in Trafalgar Square the one and only public square in this gigantic city, and in the Thames Embankment the only roadway that has not been laid out with merely commercial objects.

Of Public  
Spaces, Parks  
and Gardens

With the fall of Roman civilisation, this large conception of architecture was lost. The arts had to be built up again, and when at length they reappear in the Middle Ages, a change had taken place, not only in their external form, but in the spirit that lay beneath and prompted their expression. Art was no longer conscious, deliberate, judging as between good and evil; it was now moving as a natural force, hardly realising to itself what it was doing. The change was responsible for some of the most beautiful qualities of mediæval art, but it had its defects. Architecture

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens was now an affair of craftsmanship, guided by inestimable tradition, it is true, but it had in some measure lost that architectonic sense to which I referred at the beginning of this paper. The castle or the cathedral formed the nucleus of the town, and houses were built up round these centres with some happy instinct for effect which gives them an undying charm. But the joy we have of them is something different in kind from the intellectual pleasure given by the simplicity and order of a well-planned city. This pleasure is the privilege of a riper civilisation. It did not lie within the consciousness of the mediæval artist; and however much we may delight in the romance and emotionalism of this extraordinary phase of art, we should look to it in vain for any clue to the problem that confronts our modern civilisation. The condi-

tions of our existence and our attitude towards life have changed entirely, and it is only our strong traditional instinct that deceives us into thinking that we can find in the art of the Middle Ages adequate expression of our own ideas and necessities. Our problem is how to open up our cities, how to get light and air and breathing space: but the man of the Middle Ages sought for shelter and protection by packing his houses together within the circuit of his walls. He left a market-place where the citizens could gather in time of trouble, but in time of peace he had to make his playground outside the city walls. The idea of laying out a city on a deliberate plan was not yet realised, and when new cities were founded—an occurrence of extreme rarity in the Middle Ages—their plan was subordinated to military considerations.

It is not, in fact, till the Renaissance, that the idea of the architecture of cities—that is, of the systematic disposition of streets, squares, and open spaces with a view to their effect—was again realised. Artists became conscious for the first time since the fall of the empire ; they turned back on themselves and took account of their work. Their theories may have been wild, but the point is that they had theories at all, that they worked no longer by instinct, but by deliberate intention. Something of the masterful controlling spirit of imperial Rome seems to have lived again in these men of the Renaissance. Order and proportion were what they had to offer instead of the wayward fancy of the Middle Ages, and if a city was now to be designed, its larger lines were considered beforehand, and buildings were to take their place in this



scheme as so many details of the design. Of Public  
Palladio devotes his third book to the Spaces, Parks  
consideration of ways, streets, bridges, and Gardens  
and squares, and though the practical  
person may discover little but platitudes  
in his chapters, the fact that the great  
Italians considered the laying out of  
cities and open spaces an essential part  
of architecture had its effect on the  
next two centuries.

To this we owe the immense develop-  
ment in garden design which belongs to  
the seventeenth century. Hitherto the  
garden had been but a small walled-in  
enclosure, dainty and fanciful in all its  
details, yet something apart from archi-  
tecture; but with the Renaissance came  
the idea of dealing with the house and  
grounds together, and that fuller imagi-  
nation which enabled Inigo Jones to  
conceive his magnificent plan of White-  
hall, and to set down a model for the

Of Public treatment of public squares in his design  
Spaces, Parks for Lincoln's Inn Fields.  
and Gardens

We have as usual to go back to the seventeenth century for our precedents. The French developed this branch of design with astounding ability; and Lenôtre and the able architects of Louis Quatorze produced at Versailles, St. Cloud, and elsewhere in France a series of absolute masterpieces in garden design. There are certain features in their work which perhaps hardly appeal to the English temperament, but it never failed in the essential quality of style, and it has been an unmitigated loss to art that the tradition which they established in the treatment of parks and great public spaces should have been swept aside in the eighteenth century.

Wren, most versatile of men of genius, was quick to see the significance of this great movement. His scheme

for the rebuilding of London struck a fresh note in English architecture. Much had indeed been done already by Inigo Jones in his designs for Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden, but here for the first time was a comprehensive plan of the laying out of a city, in comparison with which what has actually been done in London seems little better than tinkering. Wren's general idea was to provide three main centres as points of predominant interest in the city. (1) A circular 'Place' on the top of Fleet Street Hill; (2) a triangular space at the top of Ludgate Hill, to include St. Paul's; and (3) an open space to include the Royal Exchange, surrounded by the Mint and other offices. These three points were to be connected by broad straight streets laid out on a deliberate system, and there can be little doubt that, had Wren been allowed to

Of Public  
Spaces, Parks  
and Gardens

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens

carry out his scheme, he would have left London one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.

But his scheme for London shared the fate of two other fine conceptions of his—the design for the grand fore court at Hampton Court, which was to terminate the avenue of Bushey Park, and that magnificent imagination of the royal palace at Winchester, with a wide straight ‘place’ in front of it leading down to the Cathedral. Yet Wren’s ideas did their work. He lifted public architecture to a different plane, and the early part of the eighteenth century is memorable in the history of art for stupendous achievements in the laying out of grounds and gardens. An opportunity of designing a city did actually come a little later on, when Wood reorganised the city of Bath for Ralph Allen. But throughout the last century

the great tradition of the seventeenth century masters was gradually losing ground. Chambers was the last of the older school; and since his time we have tried one desperate experiment after another, with the result that we have lost our way, and that the nineteenth century will probably be memorable as the most barren of artistic creation in the history of the civilised world. I am talking of architecture and what are called the minor arts. Great individual work has of course been done, but these brilliant flights are like the course of Icarus. They sink below the horizon, leaving but some vague memory to take its place in that subliminal consciousness which forms the background of our work. They have not struck root. They have helped us, as yet, but little to build up again our broken tradition.

Of Public  
Spaces, Parks  
and Gardens

I have made this brief historical survey to support the position advanced above, that, as compared with the ancients, and with the great masters of modern art, we have dropped far behind in our treatment of public spaces; so much so, indeed, that we seem to have lost sight of the significance of this problem, of its extreme importance in the work of making our cities beautiful. Where, then, is the source of our failure? I think it is to be found in the absence of any principle; in our incapacity to arrive at any dominant idea which will introduce logic and system into our chaotic practice. Now, Wren at any rate, in his plan for the laying out of London, had two main objects in view: (1) to make the most of his buildings architecturally, and to provide fine vistas leading up to definite objects; (2) to provide the most direct and ample

thoroughfares possible to the chief Of Public  
places of public resort ; and these would Spaces, Parks  
probably be admitted to be the main and Gardens  
ideals to be aimed at in the laying out  
of cities. Yet, in fact, the first of these  
two principles has been overlooked ;  
and the second, though recognised in  
theory, has been subordinated to other  
considerations. New streets have been  
planned with regard to convenience of  
building sites, to get over the difficulty  
of some obstinate tenure, and to avoid  
the heavy outlay involved in a clean  
sweep. One is aware of the great diffi-  
culties that municipal bodies have to  
contend with ; none the less, if ever we  
are to improve our cities, these difficul-  
ties must be faced and dealt with. We  
have to learn the folly of frittering away  
great sums of money on schemes merely  
ephemeral, and which stand in the way  
of large and permanent improvements.

What we want is a principle. Individual architecture is of course a matter beyond control, but the laying out of streets is on a different footing ; and if the authorities in charge could make up their mind to any one definite and consecutive idea, something would be done to redeem the streets from their prevailing insignificance. If, for instance, streets were laid out solely with regard to convenience of traffic, we should at least have the embodiment of an idea ; there would be something that appealed to the imagination in the consciousness of a principle of some kind manifest in every detail. The railway terminus would be the point of departure. Instead of the mean approaches that drop one suddenly at some of our great stations, wide open spaces would be reserved in front of them, and it would be possible to give their



surroundings that grim appropriate Of Public  
dignity which results from the exact Spaces, Parks  
adaptation of means to ends. and Gardens

I do not mean that this *is* the principle to be sought for. The stream of traffic can be dealt with like a watercourse. It will suit itself to whatever channels are found for it; and I have taken this merely as an instance to show that any principle is better than the blind, haphazard tangle which results from working on no system at all.

Perhaps the sanest method of dealing with a great city would be to determine on the buildings which are of absorbing interest and public importance; and taking these as data, so to lay out all future streets and public spaces as to make these buildings the principal features, and to bring them into relation with each other. By this means one building would help another; and

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens instead of the series of abrupt shocks to our æsthetic sense, which is all that our cities provide for us, some continuous impression would be possible of a great and beautiful city. It seems superfluous to dwell on such an obvious principle at all ; yet in fact it has not been followed in London, except in Waterloo Place with Westminster Abbey in the distance, and that one admirable work, the Thames Embankment. The British Museum is to all intents invisible till you get right up to it. Here was a chance for making the most of a costly and impressive building, which has been lost. A square in front of the British Museum, laid out on large and simple lines, would have redeemed one of the dullest parts of London from its dreary ugliness, and have formed a fitting conclusion to the great thoroughfare that has yet to be made

from the Strand to Oxford Street. Even the Germans, whose taste is by no means absolute, have done better with their museum at Berlin. Northumberland Avenue is another instance of a great opportunity wasted. All our attempts, in fact, in this direction show the same absence of idea, the same shortsighted effort after an immediate practical settlement; and the consequence is that, instead of being, as they should be, the visible symbol of the intelligence of a great people, they merely express the meanest side of modern commercial life. Moreover, we have lost that precious quality of audacity which can sometimes do the work of genius. The streets that we do lay out—Shaftesbury Avenue, for instance—are timid and tentative. The roadway is too narrow for the traffic, the pathway so exiguous that the trees we industriously plant

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens will never have room to grow. The islands of refuge are mere spots in the street : nearly every detail shows the weak hand of uncertain purpose. Portland Place and parts of the Mile End Road seem to me the only roadways in London laid out on an adequate scale. In all this work we want courage and we want principle. We have lost touch of the sober gravity of the masters of the eighteenth century, and not yet replaced it by any fit expression of our own existence.

The design of streets and open spaces is undoubtedly a matter of intricate difficulty ; but in the case of public gardens and parks the designer has, or should have, a perfectly clear field. He has no vested interests to deal with, no necessities of traffic to meet. It is a fair and square question of design ; yet we are hardly more successful with our

parks and gardens than we are with our streets, and it is a somewhat depressing reflection that recent work is inferior to what was being done in England thirty or forty years ago. The straight walk into Regent's Park is an excellent piece of work, hardly simple enough, it is true, yet quite admirable as compared with Battersea Park and the design of certain of the newest public parks laid out in London. These and most other public parks attempt to mask the absence of idea by an abundance of trivial detail. Corners here and there may be pretty; the gardener is a clever and laborious man, and may make his flower-beds bright, but there is nothing to impress the imagination with that sense of spacious dignity which hangs about the gardens of the seventeenth century. Their design is wanting in distinction; they

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens fail habitually into that 'petite manière mesquine,' as the old writer called it, which is the certain evidence of bad design. Much of the laying out of the Bois de Boulogne seems to me a perfect realisation of the bourgeois ideal—a type of all that is to be avoided in the design of public gardens. Moreover, considered from a practical point of view, these parks are not effectual. Space is wasted by these little irregular lots of bushes, and it is not easy to play cricket with a tree in the centre of the pitch. It would indeed be a distinct practical gain to have the grass cleared of these fancies of the landscape gardener, and the trees and bushes confined in formal avenues and groves.

But the landscape gardener is not easily dislodged. He has held the field for a hundred years, and it is a curious fact that, although we have such

admirable models as Kensington Gardens and Hampton Court, our public parks are still laid out in the manner introduced in the latter part of the last century. The men who brought in what is known as landscape gardening were neither designers nor men of exceptional ability. They represented no fresh movement in art, but a passing sentiment in literature: yet they and their successors have stereotyped certain conventional notions of design which have no reasonable ground in theory, and are nearly always disastrous in practice. With many of these notions private persons have long parted company, yet they remain a rooted habit with municipal and other bodies who control the expenditure of public money. Public bodies, it is well said, have no conscience, and, in matters of art, this defect is not redeemed by their intelligence.

The characteristic of the older work is a certain grave simplicity, which left nothing to chance and the unforeseen, yet did not suggest unduly the hand of the designer. The elements of the design of Hampton Court Gardens are very simple: a straight broad walk before the Palace, with a semicircular garden in front, and the Longwater stretching away from the outer edge of the semicircle. All the complications of Kensington Gardens, all its vistas of tree stems, resolve themselves into a few avenues laid out on a definite system. The effect is obtained by simple means used with knowledge and imagination. There is no effort apparent, no straining after effect; the eye rests contentedly on quiet masses of foliage, and uninterrupted stretches of grass. The charm of nature is there without its wildness; only in a



certain orderly restraint the intelligence of man is suggested, and perhaps in a statue here and there, or in the moulded curb of the water piece. These are places in which one feels at home, and the gain of designs laid out on these broad lines is, that every year they improve as the trees fill out and the masses of foliage begin to tell; whereas in most of our modern parks, such design as there is becomes in time unintelligible owing to the growth of the trees.

It is impossible to lay down rules in the abstract for the treatment of a public park. The nature of the ground and the size of the park, together with its purpose, vary in every case, but there still remain models in abundance for imitation. The great Italian gardens, admirable as they are, seldom apply in England. They were inspired by the

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens nature of the ground, and little opportunity or necessity exists in England for their series of terraces and magnificent staircases. The gardens of the Tuileries and the Luxembourg show what may be done on a comparatively moderate scale by the use of simple means, employed with due selection and an accomplished sense of scale. The gigantic grounds of Versailles are too heroic in size ever to be imitated. Their prodigal use of fountains, statuary, and temples is neither possible nor desirable, but these are not of the essence of the design. Its real value lies in its splendid spaciousness, the courage and firm grasp of proportion which enabled Lenôtre to design and carry out such a colossal scheme without tripping in his scale. The design of smaller gardens, such as those placed in squares of houses, ought not to be

a very difficult affair. These should fall naturally into simple geometrical designs, and all that should be necessary is to keep the detail quiet, and not to be afraid of repetition ; yet I doubt if there remains in London a single garden of this kind which has not been cut up at random with narrow paths wandering aimlessly about the grounds.

Of Public  
Spaces, Parks  
and Gardens

Perhaps the most distressing feature about our parks and gardens are the fittings, as one may call them, and by this I mean the fountains, seats, band-stands, and refreshment places. The seats, for instance, are mostly of cast-iron of the worst possible design, and make one long for the sturdy wooden seats that still survive in the alleys of old-fashioned gardens. Or if cast-iron is inevitable, at least some simple design might be obtained, which would take its place in the garden in all sobriety.

The drinking-fountains show the same ill-judged parsimony. It would be better to have none at all rather than these lamentable castings, for indeed all these details show a quite inadequate conception of what is wanted. A public park, it is agreed, must have a fountain and a band-stand, but anything will do that can by a fair exercise of charity be called by that name. The result can only be pretentious shabbiness. If the necessary money is not forthcoming at once, it would be better to wait till it is, rather than attempt to turn out a park ready made, and the money that is frittered away in a succession of these wretched ornaments would provide a few good statues and an occasional fountain by first-rate sculptors. Really good work of this kind would be a lasting pleasure to every one ; for we are not to suppose that the public cares for

the makeshifts provided for it in its parks. It has to accept them in lieu of better. We have in England at this moment able sculptors for whom little work is to be found. It would surely be a wise and generous use of public money to employ such men to beautify our parks and avenues, instead of habitually wasting it on merely commercial fittings.

In the gardens of the Tuileries there are statues of animals by Auguste Cain and by Barye, admirable in themselves, and essentially modern. They are thoroughly decorative in the sense of taking their place in an ordered scheme. Yet the least informed of casual loafers must find interest in their energy and movement. It is an example that might well be copied in England. It is, unfortunately, a well-known fact that our English cities are lamentably deficient

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens in public sculpture, properly so called. The opportunity has not been given to our sculptors to rival the superb work of Mercié, Barrias, Frémiet, and Carpeaux, — men who have adorned the gardens and public places of Paris with masterpieces of sculpture not inferior to the very finest work of the Renaissance. We in England put up statues, by fits and starts, to our great soldiers and statesmen, but we nearly always put them in the wrong places, in narrow streets, or at crossings where they are lost in the whirl of traffic and omnibuses, or disappear into a background of buildings. The right position for a statue is in some place of rest and quiet, where its immobility is not outraged by the rush of modern life ; and clearly parks and public gardens can offer them this decent refuge. If we could persuade our authorities to return to the older

methods of design, and allow us now and then a pole-hedge of lime or horn-beam, or some semicircle of yew, for a background, our sculptors would find their opportunity; and I think they would welcome some chance of escape from the oppressive seriousness of modern work. For our art is getting heavy-handed. We have stifled that delicate art which breathes in the pictures of Watteau and Lancret. In an absurd search for intensity, we have lost all lightness of touch; we seem to reserve our art for State occasions. Now, here, in this garden statuary, is one outlet for this more playful spirit. In the last century there was a manufactory of garden images in Piccadilly—in fact, there were four. Mr. John Cheere, the owner, did a splendid trade in cast lead figures—gods and goddesses, nymphs and shepherds, Pan with his

Of Public Spaces, Parks and Gardens pipes, Actæon with his hounds, mowers, shepherdesses, and Father Time with his scythe: these sweet suggestive figures still linger rarely in old-world gardens, almost living by the associations of the many that have loved them. These figures are typical of a life and environment that seems almost lost to us now.

For in all these matters, the most advanced thought is that which puts itself back. We have made tremendous strides in science and mechanics, but meanwhile the arts have been neglected and starved of their right intellectual food. As we have advanced in one direction, we have in this century fallen back in others. We have lost our sense of proportion, we have less understanding of the grace of life than our forefathers, less knowledge of how to make our surroundings comely and reasonable; and we shall not find the way to this



by desperate attempts at making our art and our language modern. In so doing we only make it vulgar. We must search again for tradition. We have to recover that fine selection, that subtle sense of proportion, which are the first elements of style, the power of rejecting the irrelevant and unessential, that nice adaptation of means to ends which tends to become more and more the greatest quality of art.

We have indeed to arrive at a new understanding of what art is, and what it can do for us in our life. I have spoken to you to-night of architectonic architecture, of the art that can bring order and thereby dignity into the countless aggregate of buildings that help to make up a city; and this aspect of architecture is, I think, the essential characteristic of art. Its strength, as a factor in human thought, lies not in

Of Public meteoric displays of manipulative skill,  
Spaces, Parks but in the steady light that it sheds on  
and Gardens chaos, in the sane order and harmony  
that it establishes between conflicting  
elements. It is here that it takes its  
place in the work of life, and at this  
point that it becomes to us a great  
ennobling influence in the restless  
labours of humanity.

V

OF COLOUR IN THE  
ARCHITECTURE OF CITIES

HALSEY RICARDO



## OF COLOUR IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF CITIES

IT has been the object, in the series of lectures of which this is the last, of each lecturer to treat the conception of the city as — speaking broadly — a whole, having a collective, individual life, the sum of cumulative entities directed to agreed ends, and working hand-in-hand on agreed lines to reach those ends ; and not as a disorderly mass of discordant entities, jealous of their own individualities and rights, regardless how much these may be at the expense of their neighbours, and eager to resist, as an encroachment on their rights, any notion

Of Colour in of compliance to what may be held as  
the Architec- the general need of the locality. We  
ture of Cities are gradually tending towards a broad  
conception of civic life, civic duties,  
civic responsibilities, and civic pleasures,  
sinking our own idiosyncrasies for the  
sake of the public good, and enduring  
a great deal of restriction on our liberty  
for the furtherance of the common-  
wealth; and it is these qualities of  
endurance, renunciation and harmony  
on which we count to give the keynote  
and charm of the city. Important as  
these qualities are in the setting out  
and structure of our cities, they become  
thrice important when we come to deal  
with the question of colour. Colour  
demands large spaces on which to realise  
itself; in small patches and spots it  
serves chiefly to irritate us, both by  
calling attention to the want of it else-  
where, and by its failure to count as

colour. Take, for instance, the coloured window boxes and blinds in a street. They might as well not be there for all the impression that they make on the general colourlessness of the street ; whereas, if they were parts of one general scheme of colour—say, turquoise tiles in a street where the houses were wholly clothed in vines and ampelopsis—they would count as brilliant climaxes in a symphony of green, and their influence would sink into and diffuse itself in the general mass of colour, as the rays in a star sapphire seem to pulse all through the jewel, though they start from a focus no larger than a point. It follows that if colour requires to be dealt with only in large areas and with broad effects, it must be applied on some broad general principle, and not left to the taste of individual effort.

In considering a scheme for the

Of Colour in colouring of a city, one must distinguish the Architecture of Cities between those places where we can employ Nature's palette and where we must use man's. In our parks, squares and open spaces we can use trees, turf and flowers; but in our streets, where the only colour that is not of our own making or collecting, is the narrow strip of sky above our heads, we must look to the buildings themselves to supply us with colour. This brings up before us the question : On what principle of the application of colour are we to work ? The answer, I think, is that just as the city, in its disposition of its forms and spaces, represents the corporate life of its citizens, so the colouring should be an indication of its corporate life also : that is to say, the colouring in the main should be heraldic. This has already been felt, and acted upon, in the instances where colour has been employed



by bodies of men—such as vestries, parish councils, railway companies, and the State. In London, each parish colours its lamp-posts the parish colours—the dust and water-carts carry the proper bearings and legends: throughout Great Britain, scarlet is the proper tincture of the Post Office. On the sea coast, where in general what of original building there is, has been pushed aside to make way for the modern erections that serve the convenience of visitors, and occasional residents—and hidden by the dreary artificialities that constitute the attractions of the place—the eye is gladdened and the landscape relieved, by the black and white heraldry of the coastguard stations. Our railway trains and our omnibuses tell by their colour the companies to which they belong and the routes they take. Amidst so much that

Of Colour in  
the Architect-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in has died, as time has rolled on from the  
the Architec- Middle Ages to ours, heraldry has come  
ture of Cities —still living—into our hands. I need  
only instance the heraldry of the cricket  
and football fields, with their distinctive  
blazers and caps—there are innumerable  
others one could quote. A kind of  
classification of buildings would grow  
up, each group denoted by some special  
colour-treatment. State buildings, such  
as the Parliament Houses, Law Courts,  
Mansion House, galleries and museums,  
let us suppose, would be built—as indeed  
they are—of stone, with wide open spaces  
all round, and the colour would be  
supplied by means of broad tracts of turf  
and evergreens in formal shapes. Our  
churches embody associations, traditions  
and feelings still extant, and so, fulfilling  
the conditions required, call for no  
special modification. Of old times,  
cities had walls, and the gates of the

city were its pride. For us of the present day walls have become unnecessary, and in the expansion of our modes of life impossible. Our gates of to-day are those huge vomitories—the great railway termini; and we might well attempt to make conspicuous what play so great a part in determining our every-day affairs. The stations themselves are, for the most part, masked by hotels; and as long as this system obtains, we must endure the obscuration of what might be an impressive and triumphant expression of our entry into town.

But the stations, with their cuttings, arches and passages, might be lime whited, and—please—the hotel frontals. The stranger, coming to town, would know of his lessening distance from the terminus by the increasing quantity of brilliant white around him. It is true

Of Colour in that this whitening would require the Architect- frequent renewal, but this from a ture of Cities sanitary point of view would not be a disadvantage: since, in the process of renewal, we should collect the great mass of the dirt and filth constantly accumulating and destroy it. And, moreover, the fresh areas of lime would do much to neutralise the corrosiveness of the gases that issue from the funnels of the locomotives. Moreover, such a determined attack upon the gloom and dirt of the railway station might do a further good, by calling upon invention to relieve this pressure of expense by contriving methods whereby the combustion of coal was more cleanly done, and the sum total of dirt in other ways diminished.

We have London already divided up into various divisions — electoral, parochial, and the like. Let us take

advantage of these, and display these divisions outwardly to the eye. Already the parish lamp-posts, and other obstacles, are distinguished from each other by pattern and colour. To define the boundaries by means of the colour of area railings, parochially coloured, would be an additional convenience; and some form of superposed tint or quartering in part might define the electoral divisions. That whole streets should be coloured, or built of coloured materials, is perhaps too much to ask for—at least, at the beginning; but crucial houses, such as those that occur at the corners of streets, having important information to give, or those on the verge of the parish boundaries, should proclaim their position and knowledge by their easily recognisable colourings. Moreover, the Vestry Hall and parish Library would gather up in

Of Colour in  
the Architec-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in concentrated form the accepted heraldry  
the Architect- of their office and locality, making them  
ture of Cities landmarks in the neighbourhood by the  
splendid richness of their colour, con-  
taining in their accumulation the separate  
badges and symbols elsewhere distributed  
through the locality, and explaining in  
the sum of their achievements the various  
voices whose utterances form the chorus  
of civic life.

The system of indicating historical  
houses, and houses made notable by  
some famous inmate, might be made far  
more effective by a larger method of  
proclaiming the fact. At present, the  
writing on the disc is often illegible to  
all but the keenest eyes, and the whole  
memorial counts for so little on the  
general mass of the building that it  
eludes the notice of any except a hunter  
of that particular specimen. This de-  
velopment might be taken in hand by

such a body as the County Council, or Of Colour in the Vestry ; but perhaps could hardly be <sup>the Architect-</sup>adequately done by private enterprise. <sup>ture of Cities</sup>

I might go on detailing special instances of the many ways that we might employ colour in explanation and adornment of our buildings, but there would be the risk of engendering a disagreement over details, and it is sufficient for the purpose of the hour if I have made clear the principles on which we should act.

In the complexity of modern life, we must seek for any aid that we can find that may help us to express what we recognise to be the right and wrong of it ; what we mean to do with it as a whole, as well as in our own individual case. In the matter of architecture, we may use colour to signify and tell things that we could not possibly explain by form, or light and shade alone ; just as

Of Colour in in a play the words and gestures of the  
the Architec- actors do not tell us everything. You  
ture of Cities have to divine, by careful watching, the  
motives that impel the *dramatis personæ*,  
underlying their statements and their  
actions ; so, when you come to add to  
the storm and stress of the drama the  
revelation of music (as in one of  
Wagner's operas), you become a witness,  
not only of the outward human body,  
with its speech and outward acts, but of  
the soul as well ; and before your  
enchanted gaze is displayed the secret  
working of the heart, its desires and its  
memories, that which impels it and that  
which curbs it.

Another means of interpretation has  
been given us, and we come away almost  
terrified by such a display. Such a  
means of revelation, though touching a  
different side of our emotions, can  
colour be to us ; nor are the emotions



touched by music greatly different from those roused by colour. I mean more especially colour *quâ* colour—as in, say, a glorious sunset; and not colour as applied in pictures for definition's sake.

Of Colour in  
the Architec-  
ture of Cities

We all know Beethoven's C Minor Symphony. It opened with the forceful knocking of Fate, and from there we passed on to the suave but sad questioning melody of the slow movement, rising sometimes into almost certitude, but relinquishing, when pressed home, its fancied security. We have passed through the ways of the scherzo, full of rugged gloomy defiance, and our path seems nearly at an end. Amidst the awed expectation, accompanied by hushed drum-taps, we push on with throbbing pulse and aching gaze, peering down the narrow alley for the spectacle that we know to be close upon us; and passing through the last few bars that

Of Colour in separate us from the finale, we come  
the Architec- upon its almost unimaginable pomp.  
ture of Cities

We are in presence of a sumptuous  
pageant ; all that we know of the  
splendour of rhythm and movement is  
there ; all that we can hope of mortal  
success seems to meet its achievement  
there. Range upon range, the pillars of  
sound stand orderly—irradiated now by  
the bright flashing of trumpets, another  
moment standing softly dim in the  
shadow of the orchestra. Phrase upon  
phrase clamours up, brilliant, trium-  
phant, intense, and their response surges  
over them like the tide of the ocean.  
Pinnacles of music start out as the  
shifting light illuminates, now one, now  
another, and sink back into the great  
bosom of sound. Delicate webs of  
tracery are there, and deep impenetrable  
spaces of shade.

Let me quote a well-known passage

from the *Stones of Venice*, on such another picture :—

Of Colour in  
the Architec-  
ture of Cities

‘We find ourselves in a paved alley, some seven feet wide, where it is widest—full of people and resonant with cries of itinerant salesmen. Overhead an inextricable confusion of rugged shutters and iron balconies, and chimney flues pushed out on brackets to save room, and arched windows with projecting cills of Istrian stone, and gleams of green leaves here and there where a fig-tree branch escapes over a lower wall, from some inner cortile, leading the eye up to the narrow stream of blue sky high over all. On each side a row of shops, as densely set as may be, occupying, in fact, intervals between the square stone shafts, about eight feet high, which carry the first floor—intervals of which one is narrow and serves as a door, the other is, in the more respectable shops, wainscotted to the height of the counter and glazed above, but in those of the poorer tradesmen, left open to the ground, and the wares laid on benches and tables in the open

Of Colour in air. The light, in all cases, entering at the the Architec- front only, and fading away in a few feet ture of Cities from the threshold into a gloom which the eye from without cannot penetrate, but which is generally broken by a ray or two from a feeble lamp at the back of the shop, suspended before a print of the Virgin. . . . We will push past into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the Bocca di Piazza, and then we forget them all ; for between these pillars there opens a great light, and in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones, and on each side the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us, in the dark alley, had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

‘ And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a

vision out of the earth, and all the great Of Colour in square seems to have opened from it in a the Architec- kind of awe, that we may see it far away— ture of Cities a multitude of pillars and white domes clustered into a long, low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure heap it seems, partly of gold and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory—sculpture fantastic and involved of palm-leaves and lilies and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and in the midst of it the solemn form of angels, sceptered, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars

Of Colour in of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry, and  
the Architec- deep green serpentine spotted with flakes of  
ture of Cities snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half  
yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their  
bluest veins to kiss"—the shadow, as it steals  
back from them, revealing line after line of  
azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the  
waved sand; their capitals rich with inter-  
woven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and  
drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and  
mystical signs, all beginning and ending in  
the Cross; and, above them, in the broad  
archivolts, a continuous chain of language  
and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven,  
and the labours of men, each in its appointed  
season upon the earth; and above these,  
another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed  
with white arches edged with scarlet flowers  
—a confusion of delight, amidst which the  
breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing  
in their breadth of golden strength, and the  
St. Mark's Lion, lifted on a blue field covered  
with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the  
crests of the arches break into a marble foam  
and toss themselves far into the blue sky in

flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if Of Colour in the breakers on the Lido shore had been the Architect-frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-ture of Cities nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.’<sup>1</sup>

Have we not really touched on the same emotions? And how universal is our hunger for colour! Consider what efforts we make to procure it,—the flowers in our parks and window-boxes—the brilliant posters on our hoardings—the trees in our boulevards. As far as informing the passer-by is concerned, an advertisement might be as well in black and white, but we go to the trouble and expense of polychromy to implant upon his memory a pleasant remembrance of the statement made. Indeed, I have heard it regretted that the hoarding, with its varied wealth of

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii., §§ xii. xiii. xiv.

Of Colour in colour, should have in the end to yield  
the Architec- place to the building that is growing  
ture of Cities behind it. This feeling can only be  
ascribed to its service as a medium for  
the display of colour. So, again, our  
admiration for the trees in our streets is  
not on account of their form, or their  
shade, or their hygienic qualities in  
freshening the air—it is for the blessed  
quality of colour that they give us in  
the arid, dirty street, when the eye is  
tired of looking on endless vistas of  
monotonous drab, and one pants for the  
refreshment of some foliage or a patch  
of green grass. And the eye is so  
provident and resourceful—out of quite  
a little of actual colour, it will construct  
fields of colour for itself, if only the  
distribution but be helpful.

It is sufficient, on a mass of black, to  
plant here and there pieces of blue in  
quite small quantities, and the whole



area becomes one sea of sapphire ; or place your threads of green on the black, and the whole field becomes a deep meadow of green ; or put purple studs on your black, and the black dissolves into a robe of violet. Consider for a moment how valuable a quality this is in a place like London, where a field of black is so easily obtained ! This charitable quality of colour should put heart into us ; for the courage to make mistakes, and to learn from them, is quite necessary in such schemes of colour. It will be said that mistakes in schemes of colour are more serious than in form, because they cannot be so well ignored, and impress themselves so lastingly on one's eyes and memory. But even then, is it such a tragedy ? Are people really so conscious of mistakes in colour, and is not the meaning of colour often allowed to supersede and

Of Colour in  
the Architec-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in the Architecture of Cities pardon the sin of its misuse? For instance: the pillar-boxes at our street corners are of an uncompromising red, and in many places jar with their surroundings to a painful extent. Yet who complains, or would complain? Its service to us, the meaning of its colour, its ready distinguishability, all justify the discord, and modulate it promptly into the key of our requirements.

I could take another instance. This summer, the balconies and portico of a large house at Hyde Park Corner bloomed out into a considerable wealth of flower and foliage. There was, if I recollect rightly, a great quantity of yellow calceolaria and yellow daisy, topped by pink geranium. In itself the mixture of green, yellow and pink was made quite without taste, and was perfectly painful. Yet from my position

as a rider on omnibuses, where one had the fullest view of it, I never heard any one remark on the failure of this colour scheme, whilst I heard countless varieties of admiration from people who at any rate considered themselves qualified to judge. Again, the meaning of the colour, the purpose of the flowers, quite swamped the confusion of the hues. We are so grateful for any little attention shown us in the streets.

We are too apt to look upon our emotions as, at best, purveyors to our intellect, and then only after they have been carefully inspected and clarified. But in reality our emotions should be the dominant things with us, and the service of the brain is to feed them with selected food and to train them with perfected discipline. That sad unlearning that we call knowledge, the regretted surrender of our illusions, seems to take

Of Colour in  
the Architec-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in our courage away. We cannot live in the Architectural illusion—no good can come of that—but we may fairly call upon science to supply us with a clear ground to build our ambitions upon. At present we are living, so to speak, without any margin—on the least possible materials. Art is not possible on such terms. We want something over for pomp, for play and play-room. Old as the world is now, and old—so to speak—as are the children upon it, our emotions are not much changed.

We are so instructed that we have put away childish things. We do not play now,—no—but we should like to. It is three thousand years since the hearts of the Achæans were gladdened by the shout of Achilles as he stood on the top of the trench near Troy; it is but a hundred years ago that the Marseillaise spoke to similar courage in the breasts

of the French. Will there come a time when one's pulse is no longer stirred by the notes of the post-horn, or one's limbs by the intoxicating beat of the drum? Think what we have spent—in our galleries and museums—to cultivate such emotions, and how, by deliberately giving the lie to all these qualities in them we call precious, in our city life, we foster the impression that such things lie apart from our life and are only curious examples of men's nightmares, not their aspirations. Art is now collected, shut up in cabinets, divorced from ordinary actual life and consequently out of contact with it, labelled as something quite independent, to be indulged in or not, according as the humour may take us. Let us quit ourselves of such a view. Let us accept the vast accumulation of the past as a storehouse, not to draw therefrom

Of Colour in  
the Architec-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in specific examples for our present use—  
the Architec- togas, helmets, and spears no longer fit  
ture of Cities our present needs—but treating them as  
the outcome of the spirit actuating the  
old masters who produced them, to  
draw from them something of their  
inspiration, and to learn from them  
something of their experience.

But we must start from some firm  
basis—men's affectations have only a  
temporary, misleading value, and we  
must seek these bases from the actual  
facts of our existence, trying to dis-  
cover what are the actual conditions of  
our present life, and how we are to face  
them—to get our problems as naked as  
we can before we think of what stuff  
wherewith to clothe them. When life  
was simpler, fewer and less subtle forms  
were required to express it; the ap-  
paratus of life was both smaller and  
more distinct. Only the elect were

permitted to express themselves and to Of Colour in  
have expressed for them, the passions of the Architec-  
their lives. Labour had no voice—no ture of Cities  
rights. On such terms, a city would  
become a most intelligible affair. It is  
girdled by a wall—for your aristocracy  
are warriors and hunters—and set on a  
hill. The foundation-stones were set,  
and the city built, in the fervour of  
religious enthusiasm.

Thus the Medes built the town of  
Ecbatana. Up the sides of a steep hill  
rose the seven circular walls, one inside  
the other, enfolding the treasury and the  
king's palace. The outer wall was of  
immense diameter, and the terraces en-  
closed by each ring carried collections  
of country houses with small farms and  
gardens attached, rather than the suburb-  
building to which we are accustomed.  
The city was consecrated to the great  
powers of the firmament, and the

Of Colour in devotion of its founders was registered  
the Architect- in the form and colour of its walls.  
ture of Cities

The battlements to the outer wall were white; to the next, black; the third, scarlet; the fourth, blue; the fifth, orange. The two last walls had their battlements silvered and gilt. Returning from an expedition or from the chase, there stood before his eyes the city of his home, voicing in its chord of colour the seven great orbs that guarded his family and hearth—the sun, the moon, and the five planets—who rose and set in ceaseless vigilance, to call him to action, to give him rest, to bring forth meat for him and the kindly fruits of the earth; and when the fever of life was over, to proclaim to him by their silent march overhead through the infinite vault of heaven the immeasurable might of Fate, and the tranquillity of the grave.



This profusion of colour and metal work strikes us as extravagant, even in conception, not to speak of realisation ; but in Herodotus' time he was writing of facts well known to many of his readers, who had seen Nineveh and Babylon, and the pictured splendour of Egypt. In the island of his fancy Plato builds his metropolis, sumptuously if you will, but not beyond measure so. The inhabitants of Atlantis were as other men are, except in the measure of wisdom allotted to them. For the rest, the description of the island, the fertility of the soil, are scrupulously kept within the bounds of probability ; the manner in which traditional names and indications of geography are intermingled ; the extreme minuteness with which the numbers of the inhabitants, etc., are given ; the confession that though the depth of the ditch appeared

Of Colour in  
the Architec-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in the Architecture of Cities incredible, 'yet he could only repeat what he had heard,'—are all so many ingenious strokes to give the impression that what he relates is the truth. And this is how he describes his citadel :—

'The Island in which the palace was situated had a diameter of five stadia. All this, including the zones and the bridge, which was the sixth part of a stadium in width, they surrounded by a stone wall on all sides, placing towers and gates on the bridges where the sea passed in. The stone which was used in the work they quarried from underneath the centre island, and from underneath the zones, on the outer as well as the inner side. One kind of stone was white, another black, and a third red, and as they quarried, they at the same time hollowed out double docks, having roofs formed out of the native rock. Some of their buildings were simple, but in others they put together different stones, varying the pattern to please the eye, and to be a natural source of delight. The entire circuit

of the wall, which went round the outermost Of Colour in zone, they covered with a coating of brass, the Architec- and the circuit of the next wall they coated ture of Cities with tin, and the third, which encompassed the citadel, flashed with the red light of orichalcum. The palaces in the interior of the citadel were constructed on this wise:— In the centre was a holy temple dedicated to Cleito and Poseidon, which remained inaccessible, and was surrounded by an enclosure of gold; this was the spot where the family of the ten princes first saw the light, and thither the people annually brought the fruits of the earth in their season from all the ten portions, and performed sacrifice to each of the ten. Here, too, was Poseidon's own temple, which was a stadium in length, and half a stadium in width, and of a proportionate height, having a strange Asiatic look. All the outside of the temple, with the exception of the pinnacles, they covered with silver, and the pinnacles with gold. In the interior of the temple the roof was of ivory, adorned everywhere with gold and silver and orichalcum; and all the other parts of the

Of Colour in walls and pillars and floor they lined with the Architect- orichalcum. In the temple they placed  
ture of Cities statues of gold : there was the god himself standing in a chariot—the charioteer of six winged horses—and of such a size that he touched the roof of the buildings with his head ; around him were a hundred Nereids riding on dolphins, for such was thought to be the number of them in that day. There were also in the interior of the temple other images which had been dedicated by private individuals. And around the temple on the outside were placed statues of gold of all the ten kings and of their wives, and there were many other great offerings of kings and of private individuals, coming both from the city itself, and from the foreign cities over which they held sway. There was an altar, too, which in size and workmanship corresponded to the rest of the work, and there were palaces, in like manner, which answered to the greatness of the kingdom and the glory of the temple.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Dialogues*: ‘Critias’ (Jowett’s translation).

In the picture of St. Mark's Square at Venice, Gentile Bellini shows Venice as sumptuously coloured and gilt. Houses that were not encrusted with marbles and mosaic sought colour and magnificence in fresco. Here in England our abbeys and cathedrals spared colour neither outside nor in. Our streets were full of colour, partly from the buildings themselves, but mainly from the gaily dressed throngs in the lanes. Brilliant processions swept through the streets, or glided past on the river. The opulence and extravagance of colour mounted high—it reached the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and then came the reaction. So far as the people were concerned, colour outside home faded entirely away. It faded from the church, for the pictures were removed by the Reformers, the stained windows knocked out and the walls defaced; it

Of Colour in  
the Architec-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in faded from the streets, for the nobles  
the Architect- who built palaces built them of stone  
ture of Cities and banished colour from their fronts,  
too wise to waste the painting of their  
finest artists by exposure to the inclem-  
encies of wind and rain, and too proud  
to content themselves with anything less  
than the masterpieces of painting. Then  
came the Great Fire, compelling the use  
of stone and brick for city architecture.  
It faded from the shelf, for the illu-  
minated manuscript gave way to the  
printed book. Still, elements of colour  
remained that are fading now. The sky  
was clear, the grass was green, and the  
seasons decked the trees with the tremu-  
lous green of spring, the full verdure  
of summer, and the russet, gold and  
scarlets of autumn. It is not too much  
to hope that we may some day move  
again in an atmosphere that permits us  
to see the glory of the sun—the dawn,

sunset and twilight, the majesty of night, Of Colour in  
the checkered azure of the sky — an the Architect-  
atmosphere that will permit living things ture of Cities  
to grow and prosper in it, and our struc-  
tures to stand uncorroded and undefiled.  
It is so much every one's wish, that we  
seem almost within distance of obtaining  
that measure of self-denial, co-operation,  
and public spirit, necessary for the  
success of any scheme of smoke abate-  
ment. That we desire colour in our  
streets, the shop-fronts and the adver-  
tisements on the hoardings show. The  
revolt against the grey stucco-fronted  
houses was in part due to the same  
feeling that followed on the Gothic  
Revival—a desire to avoid anything that  
might savour of dishonesty in construc-  
tion; but the red buildings arose more,  
I think, as a protest against the  
monotony and colourlessness of our  
streets. Now that we have tasted blood

Of Colour in —so to speak—we want more, and we  
the Architect- want it permanent. Red brick and  
ture of Cities terra-cotta discolour ; coloured stones  
and marbles grow dim and perish in  
shocking haste ; and it would seem as if  
no building material but what had got  
practically a glass face to it would be  
able to contend against the corrosion  
of the air of a manufacturing city.

The use of permanent coloured build-  
ing materials in our towns would involve  
great changes in our treatment of our  
buildings. The mere fact that they are  
permanent comes as a shock, because  
till now we have been in the habit of  
calling upon Time to aid us—by soften-  
ing here, blunting there —enforcing  
some particular effect, and repressing  
some other ; constructing contrasts by  
the aid of dust and lichen, and in a  
measure harmonising what was discord-  
ant by blending the mass into a whole.  
We must give up this. But in a



city, is this sacrifice a serious one? Of Colour in  
Before Time has begun to spare any <sup>the Architect-</sup>  
attention on the building, the grime and <sup>ture of Cities</sup>  
smoke of our fog-laden atmosphere have  
done their work of degradation, and, in  
the quick passage of its decay we get  
a harmony, but it is a harmony of filth.

On the other hand, we have advantages. All those shadows and half-tones that we so carefully construct by means of cornice and pillar, architraves and mouldings, we can supply in colour—that is to say, we can get their equivalents in contrast by variety of colour. And then—in our dark and narrow streets—what a boon to be relieved of the pressure of cornice and pillar—especially when they appear to be resting on huge areas of plate glass! We want no projecting mouldings in our streets; nothing to lessen the amount of sunshine that may get in them; nothing on which the soot and

Of Colour in dirt may lodge. Every time that the  
the Architec- woodwork of your windows had to be  
ture of Cities repainted, the walls would be washed  
down and your buildings will stand as  
they did on the first day that the  
scaffolding was removed. One hears it  
said that colour, used in such quantity  
as this, however well it might look in  
a hot climate where there is abundance  
of sunshine, would not suit our cold and  
dark climate. But this is not so. Of  
course, there are occasions when the  
necessity of reflecting back the maximum  
amount of light overrides all other con-  
ditions, but this does not affect the fact  
that the full wealth and beauty of colour  
is best seen, not under strong light, but  
under soft half light. Strong light  
bleaches colour. Nor in Nature do we  
find strong colour until the light begins  
to abate. Go into a garden soon after  
the sun has set, and see what fire of  
colour is there. It is then, as you look

on the grass lawn, that you know what Of Colour in  
sheer green can be : transcending colour, the Architec-  
as jewels and stained glass seem at times ture of Cities  
to transcend colour and rise into music.

There is the red of the clove carnation—grave and subdued—not the lambent fire of the tulip, nor the roused ember-glow of the begonia, nor the dazzling scarlet of the geranium—but clouded into an austere dignity of red, as seen in the sunlight. But as the shadow of evening draws near, the carnation glows as a live coal. Petal after petal seems to struggle up from the full arteries of the plant through the soft films of purple clouding. Tipped with the fire of the ruby and stained with the hues of the garnet, the colour seems to palpitate and suffuse the mysterious dark spaces from which it rises, till the green lances that are its leaves float on a violet sea, forming a weedy tangle enmeshing these sanguine islands that are the very heart's

Of Colour in blood from the realms of spice, as they  
the Architect- surrender their fragrance to the ambrosial  
ture of Cities air. There is the blue of the larkspur ;  
the blue of infinity was its home, and it  
touched all the deep places of this earth  
in its passage hence. It was woven by  
Persephone as she lay in the lap of  
Demeter. Threads of it came from the  
wine-coloured ocean—from the still  
dark pool in the lonely glen—from  
many-fountained Ida came strands of  
green moss and the creamy foam of  
leaping waters—and the great powers  
that lie under the world hymned a  
solemn chant whilst she wove.

There is the yellow of the wall-  
flower, tawny and stained with russet.  
All day the bees came about it, murmur-  
ing, for its honey. It served as a golden  
throne to the butterflies, and the lizard  
sought security behind its bushy growth.  
But now its cascades of yellow are un-  
troubled, and the multitudinous hues of

gold and copper, of jacinth and amber, of orange and citron, now that the exhaustion of the day is over, mingle into a translucent mass of fragrant honey—the candied Paradise of which the closed butterfly and hived bee dream.

Of Colour in  
the Architect-  
ture of Cities

I do not say that the light in our streets will reveal to us such imagery from the colours that would be used, but I do mean that these intensities and qualities of colour are what we ought to use. Here and there we may strike the scarlet of the poppy, the yellow of the iris, and the blue of the salvia—but only as a crowning touch and focus in the great fields of colour that are the groundwork of our decoration.

Let us go into Trafalgar Square and, taking up our position by King Charles's statue, let us try and conceive 'the finest site in Europe' in terms of colour. We will not attempt to rearrange the disposition of the walls and

Of Colour in terraces, nor rebuild the houses ; and  
the Architec- with this careful moderation upon us,  
ture of Cities we must gaze with dim eyes on either  
side of us. Perhaps, without imputation  
upon our claim for moderation, we  
might remove some of the statues.  
Before us rises the column, relieved  
against the green of the square—for we  
would have the area in which the foun-  
tains play laid down with turf and  
studded with trees of formal shape and  
no great size, standing either in the  
ground or in wood boxes. The great  
basins of the fountains (might they be  
reduced?) we would line with blue tiles  
of varied tints and so modulate the  
colour of the water in them. On the  
north wall we would gather up all  
the heraldry of the County of London  
and place it there in the form of  
enamelled shields, so that the wall shall  
be as rich in colour as the page of  
a missal. The reliefs and figure of

Gordon's statue we will have gilt, and in future we will ask that the pedestals shall show as little stone as possible; let us have in the panels enamel plates of some rich colour, over which are fastened the gilt bronze letters of the inscription. Above the balustrade rises, from its strip of green, the National Gallery, and to the right comes St. Martin's Church. Far back and between stand St. Martin's Town Hall and Library, and here again all that there is of electoral and parochial of St. Martin's would be blazoned forth. The walls would proclaim the hue of St. Martin's cloak; bands of inscriptions would set forth the nature of St. Martin's property,—what was public, what private. Along the receding perspective of the streets the threads of St. Martin's colour would stretch like arteries from the heart of the parish. Part seen, as we look down the Strand, would be the immense mass

Of Colour in  
the Architect-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in of Charing Cross Station and Hotel,—  
the Architec- like a snow mountain against the sky.  
ture of Cities

There is this amiable quality about whitewash, that when you have whitened the building you also have coloured it. The white seems to borrow and steal from far and near. It collects blue from the sky, green from the trees, reds and russets from the walls, and sober shadings from the ground. It holds them lightly, tremulously,—a cloud crosses the blue sky and the whole gamut of colour vibrates in another key.

The club buildings on the one side of Trafalgar Square, and Morley's Hotel on the other, would be in white, except where they bore the heraldry of their locality; whilst the Post Office, that is now semi-concealed in the latter, would flame out in its state-colours.

But what a change this symphony in gold and white and green would be from the present drab monochord!



And it would be in greatest measure independent of the seasons—for grass is green the whole year through; and if bays and cypress are too tender to survive our winter's gloom and fogs, they can be removed into security during the dark months and placed again in their positions when the days have lengthened themselves. I have spoken of it before, but I repeat it again : that if you use colour you must use it in large masses. I must add, that it must be gradated. There are many methods of achieving that result—but gradated it must be. A piece of ungradated colour is a monstrosity. It does not exist in Nature, and though we may oppose Nature in many of the things we do, we may not oppose her in that. Nor, except with the paint-pot and machine-made tile, is it easy to procure uniformity of tint, so resolute seems Nature on this particular. This

Of Colour in  
the Architect-  
ture of Cities

Of Colour in appears at first to conflict with the use  
the Architec- of whitewash, but it is not so really.  
ture of Cities

All colours, lay them as carefully as you will, get gradated by reflected lights and colours impinging on them, but, as a rule, not in sufficient quantity to appease the eye ; whereas white is able to accept all the external colour that is available, to an extent that can satisfy the eye. Our colouring, therefore, must be in large gradated masses, and—again accepting Nature's methods in this matter—sparing in the use of brilliant positive tints. The sea is blue, and the earth is green, and there is plenty of it, but the flowers are few—even when the meadow is shot with buttercup and daisy, and the cornfield with poppy. But the wise application of colour is a matter which we may consider after we have agreed upon the principle.

Heraldry had its roots in war ; and from the strife of men against men,

their passions, their abilities and hopes, Of Colour in  
came the superstructure of colour, the Architec-  
charged with history and meaning, ture of Cities  
fenced round by law. The temple  
walls, the battlements, the ships' bul-  
warks, were gay with shields of heroes ;  
from tower and spire waved the pennons  
and standards, placed there by man's  
hand, but kept there by man's blood.

We, too, have our strife—but it is  
against want and disease, dirt and dis-  
order.

We fortify our city against these  
enemies, setting our houses in order,  
summoned by the pity of these later  
days, and marshalled by the knowledge  
their science has given us. Strong and  
brave, let us go out to our fight clothed  
with the distinction that colour can give  
us, and cheered by the *camaraderie* that  
such colour confers : and, the day's  
work done, there is the city beautiful—  
firm, stable, our home. Within its

Of Colour in many walls are the hostages we have  
the Architect- given to fortune,—the treasures our  
ture of Cities forefathers fought to secure, the monu-  
ments to which we are the heirs. Is  
it too much to hope that some day  
our children may say to the stranger,  
' Walk about Zion, and go round about  
her : tell the towers thereof. Mark ye  
well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ;  
that ye may tell it to the generation  
following ' ?





GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE L



3 3125 01335 6254

